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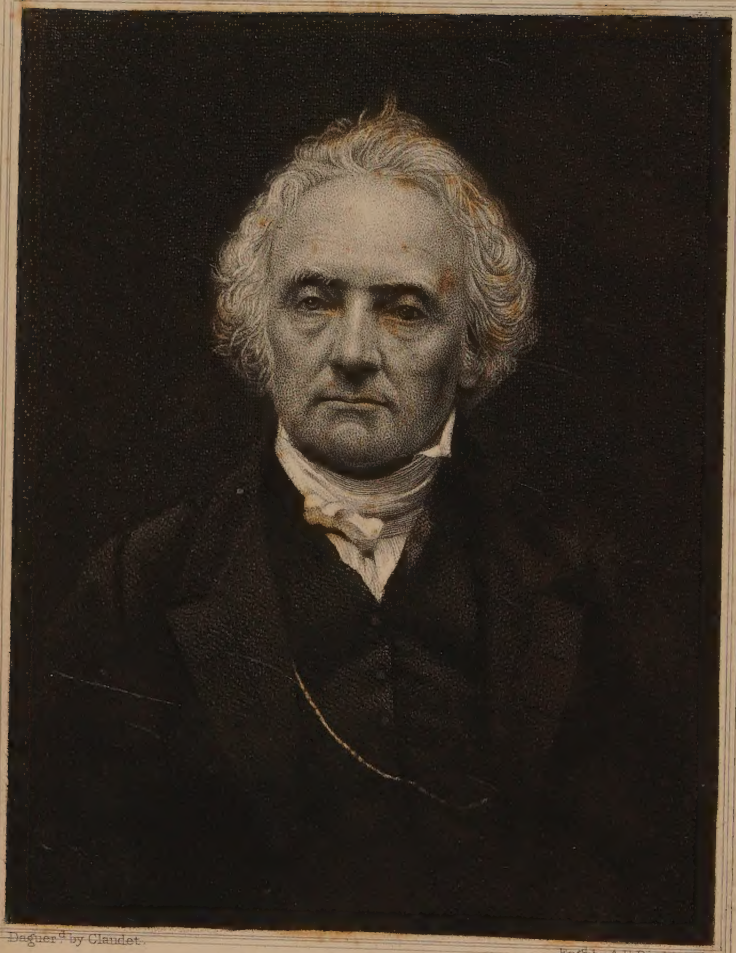

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SERMONS

AND

DISCOURSES

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D., LL.D

NOW COMPLETED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF HIS

POSTHUMOUS SERMONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I

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WAKING OUT OF
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SERMON I.

On the Paternal Character of God.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" MATTH. vii. 11.

IN our purposed treatment of this verse we shall advert to some of the general doctrine that may be educed from it.

I. The first thing to be noticed is the designation of evil, given by our Saviour, to men of whom He nevertheless admits, that they profess a habit and are prompted by an affection, both of which are unquestionably good. It is surely a good thing for one to have a parental fondness towards his own offspring. We cannot dispute that there is much of loveliness, in the various guises and manifestations of this universal instinct of our nature. We feel as if it had a moral beauty, even when we observe it among the inferior animals—and, still more, when we rise to those more touching and graceful exhibitions of it, which occur every day in our own species—whether we read it in the delight of a mother's eye when she looks around on the health and happiness of her children; or, when disease has entered the household, we read it more unequivocally still in the agitations and alarms of a mother's tenderness. In the shade as well as in the sunshine of domestic history, does this affection give proof the most conclusive both of its reality and its force. And we are not sure if there be not even more of what may be called the picturesque of human virtue, in its darker passages,—as when the mother plies the work and the labours of an untired watchfulness over her infant's dying bed, or pours the flood of now unlocked sensibilities over her infant's early tomb. There never was a heart that could be less unmoved by such a representation, than that of our pitying Saviour; and we may be very sure that He who wept at the grave of Lazarus would have given both His sympathy and His approval to this agony of afflicted nature. He would recognize it to be good, to be unquestionably good; and still we have to ask, what it was that He saw in those parents, who, in the instance at least which Himself has specified, felt and acted in the way that was good, what that was which could have led Him who knew what was in man, to denounce them in character as evil?

The devotedness of a parent to his children, equals, even in every-day life, that which History has recorded to us of the sublimest heroism. For them he makes the largest surrenders of ease and time and fortune. He will compass sea and land in quest of a provision for them—and, for their sakes, nerve himself against the buffeting of all the elements—at one time adventurously ploughing the ocean in their behalf; and, at another, living for years in the exile and estrangement of a foreign clime, with nought to soothe him in the midst of his fatigues but the imagery of his dear and far distant home. It is the strength of this family affection by which the great society of mankind is upholden, made up as it is of families. It is this which nourishes them in childhood, which counsels and cares for them in youth, and which even after the perversities or the losses of their manhood welcomes them back again to the roof of their nativity, and throws them as before on the yet unquelled and unextinguishable kindnes

of the parents who gave them birth; and who, even in the winter frost of their now declining years, and perhaps the hardship of their declining circumstances, still find the love of offspring all alive and warm in their aged bosoms. It is in truth one of the strongest and most enduring of nature's propensities—as beautiful in its exhibition as it is useful in its exercises; and still the mystery is unresolved, what He, whose discerning eye saw it to be in all men and spoke of it as good, what that was which He saw universally along with it, and on which He could censure and stigmatize all men as evil.

For an answer to this question, we might draw aid and illustration still from the case of a family. We admit the whole truth and tenderness of the parental affection. It were in the face of all experience, did we deny either the reality or the strength of those instinctive regards, which flow downwards from a father's or a mother's heart, upon their own offspring—and we just bid you advert to the weight of gratitude which so rightfully lies on those children who are the objects of them. Surely if the spectacle of tenderness on the one side be so very pleasing, the spectacle of disobedience or neglect on the other is most offensively revolting. In proportion as the father lavishes of his ceaseless and untired generosity upon the son,—in that proportion do we look with moral antipathy to the disdain, or the defiance, or the reckless independence of the son upon the father. Even though he should do with his hand the bidding of this his natural superior, yet, if he bear in his heart either a cold indifference or a positive distaste to the person and society of his own parent, this were enough to convict him of a moral perversity the most monstrous and unnatural. We cannot refuse the undoubted good will which glows unextinguished, and perhaps unextinguishable, in the bosom of the one: and all that we ask of you is just to form a right estimate, when instead of being met from the other by reverence and by good will back again, it is only responded to with contempt, or with carelessness, or with the selfish unconcern of one who can ravenously seize upon the gifts, but without one movement either of grateful or of duteous inclination towards the giver. On looking to this domestic relationship, it were a libel on humanity to affirm, that there is not among parents much of that love and liberality to their children which are undoubtedly and most beauteously good. But if, on the other hand, if it shall be found of any of these children, that they can trample all this indulgence under feet, and heedless of the hand that sustains them, can forget the claims of a father's tenderness and turn unimpressed away from the earnestness of a father's voice, then, as surely as the first of these exhibitions was good, so the second of them is most odiously and most painfully evil.

Now we admit that the love of parents to offspring is nearly universal; and we venture not to affirm how often or how seldom it may be, that this ingratitude of offspring to parents is exemplified within the limits of an earthly household, or how often violence is done to this relationship in several families. But viewing creation as that spacious household which is presided over by a universal parent, and peopled by a universal family—looking to the relationship in which all the men of our earth stand to their Father who is in heaven, we affirm, that there is none exempted from the guilt of having done most outrageous violence to this relationship, no not one.—The charge which we distinctly prefer against every son and daughter of the species is their heedlessness of God; or, if they would but examine their own hearts and they will find it there, a cleaving and constant ungodliness.—The fondest and most unnatural mothers are alike in this—the one differing wholly from the other in relation to their own family; but, viewed as members of the universal family, each deformed by foulest ingratitude to the common parent of them all—not chargeable in common with the want of love to their own offspring; but in reference to Him of whom themselves are the offspring universally chargeable with the most flagrant defects both of love and of loyalty—not evil it may be, but good, in regard to that instinctive affection which binds them to their own little ones; yet no good, but glaringly and undeniably evil in regard to their distaste and disinclina

on for God. Look to them as at the ead, each of her own household commu- ity, and they have at least one point or roperty of good parents. Look to them s members of that great community, hose habitation is the universe, and hose head is the creator of all—and ey have all the delinquency in their pirits of evil children. Our Saviour saw he one thing they had and pronounced to be good, even as when He looked to he young man in the gospel He loved im. But He further sees the one thing hey lack, the great master-virtue of every reature both in heaven and on earth, nd without which all other virtue is aseless and perishable; and so they vho knew how to give good gifts unto heir children, are nevertheless evil and ccursed children themselves.

This language is not too strong for the guilt and the turpitude of that enormity wherewith humanity is chargeable. Yet the majority of our world are all unsuspicious of having ought so foul and so enormous about them. They can see and be impressed by it as a great moral delinquency, when a son bears either a scowl upon his countenance, or an antipathy in his bosom towards his earthly father; and they will even readily admit, that no constrained obedience by the hand, can atone for the disaffection of the heart in a state of hostility and revolt against the parent who gave him birth. And even should there be no positive hostility, yet should the heart be in a state of indifference only,—the indifference you will observe of a child to that parent, who tended him from infancy to manhood, and who now feels it the sorest agony of nature, that he should have brought up a family who simply do not care for him—this neglect merely, even though there should be no hatred, is enough of itself to fasten the imputation of a very foul deformity on him who is chargeable therewith. Yes! we are capable of feeling most vivid indignation, when an earthly parent is thus robbed of that moral property which belongs to him, in the love and the loyalty of his own offspring—and how then can you miss the far more emphatic application of a principle, the very same in kind, though far more intense in degree, to our Father who is in Heaven? What do you make, we ask, of that great human family, who have cast off the allegiance of their hearts from Him and have turned every one of them to his own way? Do you call it nothing that this stray planet of ours should be burdened with a race sunk in deepest apathy toward God; and, if not lifting up the cry of positive rebellion, yet losing all sense of His kindness in universal regardlessness? What do you think of man that derived and dependent creature, walking through life so heedlessly and so independently of the Creator who gave him birth—receiving from his hand the inspiration of every breath which he draws; but with no habitual aspiring of the soul to Him back again—curiously fashioned by the skill of that Master Architect who formed him; yet bearing it as proudly as if all his parts and all his faculties were his own—nourished from his cradle to his grave by the gifts of an all-sustaining Providence; and reckless all the while of the giver who bestows them—selfishly revelling in the midst of a thousand earthly gratifications; but without any rejoicing gratitude to Him who out of the treasury of His own fulness, hath poured them forth in such luxuriance upon our world—living every hour under the guardianship of a God whose eye watches him continually; and yet with his own eye almost as continually averted from his God—looking abroad on a glorious panorama with heaven's illuminated concave above his head, and around him a scenery of smiling landscapes; but without the recognition of that unseen Benefactor who pencilled it with all its beauties, and lighted it up with innumerable splendours—inhaling fresh delight through every organ of his sentient economy: yet all his senses steeped, as it were, in the utter oblivion of Him who furnished him with all his various capacities of sensation, and so adapted him to the theatre which he occupies, that the air and the water and the earth and all the elements of surrounding nature are the ministers of his enjoyment? You know how to denounce the ingratitude of a child to its earthly parents—but is there no term in your vocabulary of crime or of condemnation for ingratitude like this? And you know how to feel for the agony of the parent's wounded bosom—and is there no force

in the complaining voice of Him who saith to us from heaven, "Behold I have stretched forth my hand and no man regarded?" There is a moral lethargy that has laid hold of our species; and we feel not the evil of that which in the upper sanctuary is felt to be enormous—the guilt of creatures who have disowned their Creator, the deep criminality of a world that has departed from its God.

You will now perceive how Jesus Christ, while He admitted of mankind that they possessed one thing that was good, even the parental affection, yet He denounced them in the general as evil. He had recently come from the place where that evil was felt in all its enormity. He had just left heaven, where, on the one hand, He witnessed the strength and the warmth of that parental affection which radiated from the throne of God upon all His creatures—and He had now lighted upon earth, where He further witnessed the total heedlessness and ingratitude of creatures back again. Possessing as He did the intelligence and the sympathies of that celestial family where He had been, He could not pronounce otherwise than in our text on the men whom He visited. The love of parents to children He could not but approve—a virtue which graced the character even of God in heaven, and which still surviving the fall of our species in the shape of a constitutional instinct, operated strongly and universally among the families of earth. Yet just in proportion that He admired the affection of parents, would He abhor the disaffection of children—the very feeling which yourselves have when you look to the earthly relationship.—But He looked also to the heavenly relationship—and then He clearly and immediately saw, that, though the parental love of the one relationship had in the shape of an instinct remained unbroken in our world; yet the filial loyalty and gratitude of the other relationship had not survived the moral ruin of our species but in the shape of a principle had totally disappeared. And so on the one hand when He witnessed among men this strong devotedness of spirit to their offspring, and on the other hand witnessed as strong a defection of spirit from their God—He both could admit that one thing which they retained to be good, and yet, wanting as they did that great virtue which links the creature to his Creator, He denounced themselves as evil.

This ought to teach, in what terms we should speak of that undoubted doctrine, as true in the eye of sound philosophy as it is in the eye of sound faith—the depravity of our nature.—This depravity does not lie in the utter destitution of all that is amiable in feeling, or of all that is useful in the practical and urgent principles of our nature. It may be expressed by one word. It lies in ungodliness. This is the constituting essence of that great moral disease under which humanity labours—a disease however that prevents not humanity from giving forth many beauteous exhibitions, whether it glows at one time with sentiments of proudest heroism, or melts at another with the sensibilities of a most graceful tenderness. There might be beauty of character even as there is beauty of colour and form, where there is no religion. There might be a moral as well as a material loveliness, apart from any love of God in the heart, or from the moving efficacy of God's law upon the conduct. There is beauty in the blush of a rose, and there is beauty of a higher character in the blush that mantles the cheek of modesty—and yet there may be just as little of loyalty to God in the living as in the inanimate subject.—It is pleasing to the eye of taste when we behold the attachment of a mother to her young, even among the inferior animals. But the same attachment is still more exquisitely pleasing, because enhanced to us by all the home sympathies of our own felt and familiar nature, when we behold a mother of our species lavishing her endearments and her smiles upon an infant family—and still as before, might the rational be as destitute of any inclination towards God as the irrational creatures—and while we refuse to neither a most precious affection, we affirm of both that they are alike dead to the power or the principle of sacredness. And it is the same of many other propensities of our constitution. There might be the cordiality that delights in the virtues of good fellowship—there might be the compassion that urges to the relief of misery—there might be the delicacy that

would refrain from what is hurtful or offensive to a neighbour's feelings—there might be a high-minded integrity, and truth that would spurn away the temptations to unworthy artifice—in a word, there might be all those native moralities which uphold the economy of an earthly state, and all those native affections between man and man which shed a pleasure and a brightness along the way of his earthly pilgrimage—all this we say existing and in busy play among the members of a terrestrial community below, among whom at the same time the religious principle was utterly unfelt, and godliness, that morality which binds earth to heaven, was neither recognized nor regarded by them. This we deem the right way to propound the depravity of our nature—to affirm, as we are fully warranted by observation to do, that there exists in the bosom of unregenerate man no affection or no affinity to God, but not to refuse, that many are the graces and many are the virtues which might flourish in the bosom even of earth's unregenerate families. On the subject of man's daring and desperate wickedness, there is a certain sternness of asseveration not fitted to advance the cause in whose service it is employed—for, independently of its harshness, there is a want of experimental truth in it, which must revolt the judgment as well as the sensibilities of an intelligent audience. Be assured that sound faith is ever at one with sound experience—and, therefore, we at all times should mix the discriminations of experience with the zeal of orthodoxy.

Ere we leave this part of our argument, we have one observation more to offer. The reason why, in looking to the multitude of man's natural virtues, we lose sight of his ungodliness is, that, in point of fact, God wills our most busy and strenuous cultivation of them all. This gives rise to a confusion of sentiment, in the midst of which we are apt to miss altogether the truth of that fatal, that entire depravity, which scripture every where ascribes to us; and which, if we did but study her lessons aright, experience would confirm. There is spontaneous compassion in many a bosom; and God wills us to be compassionate. There is instinctive affection almost with all for their own children; and God tells us to love our children. There is an inborn uprightness with some in virtue of which they would not lie, and would not steal; and God bids us to lie not and to steal not. And hence that perplexity of thought, which I am now trying to unravel. People delude themselves into the imagination of a certain godliness within them, because they do many things the matter of which is the very matter of God's own commandment. The difficulty is to make them conceive of two actions which, in respect of *materiel*, are altogether the same, that, in respect of *morale*, they may be wholly dissimilar, nay opposite. To refrain from theft in the spirit of high and honourable feeling, is not the same exhibition with that of refraining from theft in the spirit of obedience to the law of God. It is the same exhibition of conduct, but not of character; the same in respect of performance, but not in respect of principle. But thus it is that a man, because of a harmony in actions which are merely external, may confound the different affections from which they have sprung and which are internal; and, merely because of certain doings, which in the letter and outward description of them are so in any conformities to heaven's law, he may credit himself with the possession of godliness—when, in fact, and within the whole compass of his moral economy, there is no godliness to be found. In this way would we convince him of sin. We dispute not that he may have many good points, many desirable properties; but he wants altogether the property of a reigning and ascendant godliness. He may be in a state of high moral accomplishment; but, substantially and really, he is in a state of practical atheism.

We have left ourselves but little room for that which is nevertheless the main lesson of our text, a lesson of confidence in the liberality and good-will of our Father in heaven. To beget in our hearts this delightful assurance, He avails himself of imagery at once the most pathetic and the most persuasive. He announces Himself to us in the familiar character of a parent. He steps forward as it were from the deep and awful mystery of His unfathomable nature—and tells us that within its recesses, there are

the workings towards us of all a Father's tenderness. To beget a trust in those bosoms, where else there might well have been a dark and overwhelming terror, He inlists upon His side the dearest and the kindliest of all human recollections—and there is not a man, who, looking back upon the days of his cherished boyhood, feels reminded by our text of the guides and the guardians of his early home, but is told that there is a fondness which far surpasses theirs, and which now beckons and beams upon him from heaven. It is thus that the unseen God looks out upon the world from the shroud of His invisibility,—and, as if to relieve our imaginations from the fears and the jealousies of a tremendous unknown, He seizes on the most intelligible of all earthly relationships; and therewith represents Himself to our species not as a Master over his household, but as a Father at the head of his family. To dissipate the injurious suspicions of His own creatures, He is fain to divest Himself of all that is spectral or alarming—and how, it may well be thought, could this be done more successfully, than by thus likening Himself to those parents who smiled upon our infancy; and, with a friendship which never can misgive, kept by us and counselled us through all the difficulties of our ascent to manhood. The lofty pavilion of His residence on high is disarmed of all its terrors, when the glorious Being by whom it is occupied thus lets Himself down as it were among our earthly tabernacles; and tells us that the instinct which Himself has planted there, but feebly expresses the affection that is in His own breast to the family of mankind. It is true that in this same text, He characterizes mankind as evil—not however as a denunciation of wrath, but rather as a device or an argument by which to win His way more effectually to our confidence. The love of offspring is one beauteous fragment of our nature which has survived its overthrow. It still gleams and gladdens throughout the ruins of fallen humanity, and casts a remaining brightness over the habitations of its outcast species. And the argument is,—if, such be the strength of this principle in our nature, that it still keeps its ground even after the mighty havoc of so wide and wasteful a disorder, how purely and how powerfully must it operate still in the unaltered heart of Him who formed us at the first after His own image—in that unviolated sanctuary which neither darkness nor disorder can possibly enter, even the sinless nature of the Godhead. There it still burns undiminished and undisturbed in all its original lustre—and by the "how much more" of our text, the forcible appeal is carried home to all the experience we ever had of love and liberality from our earthly parents who are evil. If our memory can tell that they, burdened with all the evil of their accursed nature, that even they have loved us—then, with Faith rejoicing in the unchanged and primeval goodness of our Father in Heaven, let us have the assurance in our hearts that He loves more truly, that He loves more tenderly, than they.

Nevertheless, and in the face of this touching demonstration, does the guilty nature of man keep by its sullen and distrustful jealousies. It feels all the consciousness of a turpitude within; and, conceiving rightly of God as a God of inviolable sacredness, it images a Being, who, from the height of His affronted majesty, looks down with the terrors of an offended countenance on the sinful world that is beneath Him. This is the strong, though secret apprehension which lurks in the bosom of all who know themselves to be transgressors. They are haunted by the dread and the disquietude of a yet unsettled controversy; and till they perceive how an adjustment can be made, and without disparagement to the high and lofty attributes of the Godhead, they cannot be at rest. It is vain to tell them of Heaven's parental love, and how far it outstrips the earthly affection of their own parents. Still there is that which disturbs and terrifies in the imagination of Heaven's high sacredness. It is even in vain to speak of its being a love unquenched by man's disobedience, as pictured forth in the Father who ran to meet his wandering prodigal and to welcome him back again. Still the sense of a dishonoured law and an incensed Lawgiver abides in the sinner's guilty bosom; and nothing can effectually appease his fears, but the revelation of that way by which the acceptance

f the rebel has been made to harmonize
ith the dignity of the offended sovereign.
This brings us to the sacrifice which
as been made for the sins of the world
—to the decease which was accomplished
Jerusalem—and by which the mighty,
ie mysterious problem was resolved,
at was unfathomable to the wisdom of
ature, and that angels desired to look
to. This resolves all difficulties; and
ow that the propitiation has been ren-
ered, man is freely invited to rejoice in
s God, and God rejoices over man as
man had never fallen. Sin is obliterat-
d by the sacrifice that has been made
r it; and now with a clear conscience
cause now on a consecrated way,
ight the guiltiest of our world draw
gh and make his requests known unto
od. He is now on firm and high van-
ge ground for prayer; and in the face
Jesus Christ that vail which mantled
e aspect of the Divinity is withdrawn.
ie voice of the intercessor is now added
the voice of the suppliant; and while
e mercy of the Godhead is all awake
the sinner's imploring cry, the Truth
and the Holiness and the Justice, are all propitiated by the Saviour who died for him. This is the mediatorial ground on which the righteous God and His rebellious creatures can commune peaceably—and now that the incense of a sweet-smelling savour is between them, He can effuse all the love and liberality of a Father on His redeemed children, and bestow good things on all who ask Him. Forgiveness is yours if you will. The clean heart and the right spirit are yours if you will. Heaven with all its glories is open to receive you. And holiness, which is the dress of Heaven, is ready to fall, like Elijah's mantle, from the hand of Him who hath said—"Turn unto me and I will pour out my spirit upon you." Under the economy of the Gospel all the ets and hindrances, which obstructed these generous communications from the upper sanctuary, are now done away. And, kinder far than ever earthly father to his offspring, does the bountiful God who is in Heaven, rejoice in meeting all the wishes, and supplying all the wants of His spiritual family.

SERMON II.

The State of the Unconverted.

t that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."—EPHESIANS ii. 12.

THE change from a wrong to a right
e in religion is a far mightier transi-
in the habit of the soul, than is gen-
lly imagined. And it is the under-
ng of the magnitude of this transition
ch lies at the bottom of all that mea-
and superficial Christianity where-
so many are satisfied, although it
ltogether short of eternal life. Ere
soul can hold affinity or conversa-
with heaven, there is a certain de-
pment which it must be made to un-
go, as great and at the same time as
ntial, as that by which the chrysalis
nancipated from its prison-house ere
n expatiate among the fields of light
of ether which are above it. We
k not of that resurrection which takes place with man on the other side of death. We speak of that spiritual resurrection which takes place here, when the heart of man is made alive to the power of unseen things, and the crust of its earthliness is broken. Man cannot by his own strength achieve this revolution upon himself. He cannot so change the feelings and faculties of nature, as that, heretofore awake only to sense and to time, he shall henceforth be awake to the things of the Spirit, and breathe with kindred satisfaction in a spiritual atmosphere. There is a translation from the walk of sight to the walk of faith—there is a passing out of darkness into marvellous light—there is a release from the bondage of the world and its besetting

influences, to the glorious liberty of a willing subjection under Him who made and who upholds the world—which are represented in Scripture, not as the fruit of an amendment that lies within the compass of human power, but as the fruit of a regeneration, which it requires the forthgoing of a divine power to accomplish; and which is likened, or rather identified in the New Testament, with that supernatural energy whereby Christ was raised from the dead. So that the power which reanimates a body is not spoken of as more extraordinary or miraculous, than the power which renovates a spirit—nor is it deemed a more supernatural achievement to call up the one from its grave and usher it into the life of nature, than to call up the other from its state of death in trespasses and sins to that new moral existence which forms the true life of the soul, the beatitude and the essence of life everlasting.

In describing, as is often done, the marks of conversion, there is much that to a general hearer must be wholly unintelligible. It is mysticism to him, because it is beyond the range of his own felt and familiar experience. How can we speak to his sympathy or to his understanding, when we assign, with what ever clearness or accuracy, the characteristics of a state, into which he has not entered? But there are also characteristics belonging to the state of unregenerated nature, out of which he has not yet emerged; and by means of these we may hold out his own likeness to some convicted, some conscience-stricken hearer. The text presents us with several of those lineaments or traits of character, which enter into the portraiture of a man previous to his Christianity. At present, we shall only fasten upon one of these—even his being without God in the world. And should we manifest the truth of this description to the conscience of any, we may perhaps with the blessing of God, succeed in alarming them into a sense of their yet destitute and unprovided eternity.

Let us therefore endeavour to show, in the first place, how truly the natural state of man is represented, as being indeed without God in the world—In the second place, how this must e er continue to be the state of man, so long as he continues to be without Christ—An lastly, let us urge, as the Gospel warran us to do, your acceptance of Christ, being the only but the sure link of union with God; and on whom if y do lay hold, you will live no long without, but you will live with God the world.

Before we enter on the first head discourse, let it be remarked, that wh we speak of man being without God, do not speak of man as outcast from t favour and friendship of God; but God, or rather the thought of God, outcast from the spirit of man. W mean by our being without God, that are without an effectual or abiding sen of Him in our hearts—that we live wit out Him in the world—that we betak ourselves to our own way, unmindful Him or of His way. In short we ta the phrase not externally, and with ref ence to the deed of the Creator, as if G had cast us off; but internally, and wi reference to the desire and spirit of t creature, as if we had cast Him off casting Him off from our allegiance as to live independently of Him, and manifest by our whole habit and histo in the world that we will not have G to reign over us.

I. Now to substantiate this charge, us not detain ourselves with any leng ened argument on the case of those our species who, whether many or fe are characterised by open and habit profligacy. We do not need laborious to search after the evidence of their ing without loyalty to God—seeing t we have the overt-acts of their disloya so palpably before our eyes. The honesty, or the malice, or the licentio ness, or the profanation—these are many visible ensigns of their rebell against that monarch whose law they directly and so daringly violate; a with such signals of defiance to hea planted along the line of their outw history, it were a superfluous task probe and scrutinize among the arc of their spirit, in quest of that ungo ness which broadly announces itsel the first glance, and in characters cannot be mistaken. It is only then the task becomes a hard one, when

ave to deal with the subtle ungodliness
f those, who, free from the delinquen-
es of human life, are studiously obser-
ant of all its decencies—of that mighty
ost who stand in the middle place be-
veen crime and Christianity—being
either to be charged with the abomina-
ons of the one, nor yet at all to be cred-
ed with the sacredness of the other.
hey form the great mass of society;
nd are spread out as it were over that
ble-land in character, where they are
ot so sunken as to be numbered among
e reprobates by the world, nor yet so
evated as to be numbered among the
ligious by Him who made the world.
ill they are without God—as much
ithout Him if they but knew it, as any
those who on the scale of the terres-
al morality are so immeasurably be-
ath them. Let the scale of that moral-
which is celestial be applied, and it
ill be found of them all, that they are
an equal distance and disruption from
od. To draw a comparison from the
aterial world—the summit of a moun-
n on the surface of our earth looks to
man eyes as if magnificently elevated
ove its base; and yet in reference to
e sun, though made somewhat nearer
it by the ascent, we are still within an
ensible fraction of being as remotely
tant from that glorious luminary, as
ose whom we have left behind us in
e depths below. There is no ascent
e can make among the terrestrial eleva-
ns of our world, which brings us sen-
ly nearer to any orb in these material
avens. And there is no ascent we can
ke among the elevations of a mere ter-
trial morality, which brings us sen-
ly nearer to Him who rules supreme
he spiritual heavens, or indeed to any
mber of heaven's spiritual family.
d just because it is a morality without
lliness—just because it is possible to
so gifted and adorned therewith, as to
k prodigiously elevated above our fel-
s; and yet, immeasurably beneath
standard of the sacred and the spirit-
to be without God in the world.
But we do not stand in need of illus-
ion from other things to make good
charge—seeing that we can do so by
irect appeal to the conscience. Let
of you but reflect aright on the his-
of a single day—and you will ac-
knowledge how possible it is to live a
life of innocence in regard to society, and
yet in regard to God a life of complete
irreligion. Vice is not a necessary
ingredient of worldliness. Yours may
be a habit of honourable business, or of
studious and enamoured literature, or of
domestic faithfulness and assiduity, or
even of devoted philanthropy and patriot-
ism—yet one and all of these, untainted
with crime, nay signalized by the respect
and gratitude of mankind, may still be
but so many varieties of worldliness.
Still while engaged in any of these ways,
it is not with God that the spirit holds
converse; but it is wholly with the
derived and dependent things which pro-
ceed from God that the spirit is at play.
Literature is better than licentiousness—
domestic regularity is better than lawless
dissipation—the business of the shop or
of the market is better than the business
of the gaming-table or of the highway.
These modes of conduct admit of com-
parison; and to certain of them rather
than to others the meed of superiority is
rightfully awarded. This we cannot
dispute; and this, for any argument of
ours, it concerns us not to deny. All we
affirm is, that it is possible, nay that it is
frequent, nay that it is ordinary as falling
in with the currency of nature—that each
of these varieties, in the habit and history
of man, may be seen exemplified in a
state of disjunction from God. There is
many a life spent in upright and prosper-
ous merchandise, and where God is un-
heeded along the whole path of it. There
is many a life spent among books and
amid the charms of philosophy; and
where the intellect of man, regaled with
these, has yet never recognized the claims
of the originating God to all the grati-
tude and all the glory of such dignified
enjoyments. There is many a life spent
in the busy succession of household tasks,
or the sweets of domestic tenderness;
and yet, in the bosom of these families on
earth, there is no hourly, no habitual re-
membrance of Him who is the great
Father of the human family. There is
even many a life spent in the bustle and
enterprise of schemes of usefulness,
where the public good is honestly aspired
after, and where apart from the pursuit
of a name, the achievement of our species'
or our country's welfare would be fea as

a real gratification; and yet, with this constitutional benevolence which so fits us for the citizenship of the world, there may be no citizenship in heaven—no interest and no part in its grand administrations—no converse with Him who sitteth upon heaven's throne—no building up of a provision either in behalf of ourselves or others for the good of eternity. In a word, each man acts according to his own proper and characteristic variety; and yet there may be nought of God in these varieties. Each man comes forth with his own spontaneous evolutions; and yet, endowed though he be with an intelligence and a will and the faculties of a moral nature, there may be as little of godliness in any of his movements, as there is in the movements of an automaton that is guided according to the springs and the workings of a machinery within. Both the physical and the moral mechanism have their place and performance on the earth below; and each may be alike removed from all contact or communication with the upper sanctuary. There may be even a moral loveliness in man separate from religion; but like that of fruit or of flowers, it is but the loveliness of earth. The man, thus decked with the graces and the accomplishments of natural virtue, may notwithstanding, only mind earthly things—and, under a thousand various hues and complexions of character from the more or less odious to the more or less amiable and engaging, there may sit one aspect of ungodliness on the face of an alienated world.

For the truth of this representation, we make our confident appeal to many a conscience. Is there none here present of whom it may be said, that heaven in their eye is a land of shadows; and that the thought of heaven's Sovereign is to them as unimpressive, as any mere shadowy imagination? God is wholly out of sight; and He is almost as wholly out of mind. They work, or they bargain, or they spend their successive hours, or they go about the varied business of their callings and their families—very much as they would have done, although in their hearts there had been no belief of God. It is not from Him that they take the guidance or direction of their life, in the main bulk and magnitude of its concerns. They move almost altogether on their own spontaneous i pulses, and scarcely fetch one impul from the consideration of God's will God's law. We state the matter plainl and for the very purpose that you m take it home to your own recollections what you daily and familiarly are— self-moving and self-regulating creatu walking in the counsel of your ow heart and after the sight of your ow eyes, and without one thought all t while of the duteousness or dependen which you owe to God. Now that H has made you, and endowed you wi certain powers, and provided you wi certain capacities of enjoyment, a placed you in a theatre richly crowd with objects upon which you can exe cise the one and gratify the other—no you are content to manage without Go to take as it were the whole interest a conduct of your existence into your ow hands—alike reckless of the power th formed and of the providence that uphol you. This practically and really is t state of nature in reference to God. Y can best tell whether in the descripti of it which we now give you recogni your own likeness—whether you are that state which substantially and in effe is a state of atheism—in that tremendo condition from which if there be resurrection here into another habit the soul, you never can be preferred he after to the honours or the beautitudes a glorious eternity—even the conditi of living as you list, of living witho God in the world.

And let it not hide this melancho truth from your eyes—that you approp ate certain days and occasions to t special recognition of your Maker. W are aware of these formalities—and th it would even pain you if they were d pensed with. There is a certain de cration of your sabbaths, a certain int ruption of your wonted attendance sermons and sacraments, which wou inflict the very same discomfort upon y that is felt by pagans and idolaters on t suspension of their solemn rites, th temple services. This after all affli you, not because an outrage upon vi godliness, but because an outrage up custom and nature—and thus the pa das of Hindoston, and the churches Christendom, might give rise to a li

xhibition of character on the part of hose who repair to them; and a like iolence may be felt as done to the habits nd the hereditary superstition of both, y any glaring inroad on their religious bservances. But truly these separate nd ceremonial acts of homage to the Divinity, argue nothing of a spirit at all ssimilated to His spirit, or of a charac- t all assimilated to His character. These utward loyalties to God do not consti- ute the habit of living with God—any nore than a thousand prostrations of the ody could make up one principle in the eart. What we allege of your prayers nd your ordinances is, that they are so nany things which sit loose as it were n the tablet of human life, without ntering as a pervading ingredient, or, f we may so speak, without making part ither as woof or as warp of the tablet self. We mean, they incorporate no- ing that is vital or permanent with the haracter. Your morning and evening xercises, and your seventh-day devo- ons, look to us as so many embank- ents thrown at stated intervals across he current of your existence. They do ot tinge or qualify that current. They nly arrest it for a little, and then let it o, but with the very same quality as efore—so that from its fountain head to s mouth, in spite of all the stops or de- ections which it may have undergone, retains its properties unaltered, from he place at which it issued to the place its discharge among the waters of the ean. And even so, we fear, with the irits of our earthly and alienated race. the progressive course of such a one, om the day of birth to the day of disso- tion, he may have his periodical deten- ons at the house of God; but whence is soon released, and let off again ithout one slight infusion of the savour godliness. The tenor of his engage- ents with this world of sense, may be oken every week by the recurrence of bbath; but, when this is overpast, his e just flows on as before without one cture of a Sabbatical spirit, or the spirit sacredness. He seems to have acted a little season the part of a religionist; t he joined with the full heart and bit of worldliness in the services of the nctuary, and retired from them as ong and unaltered in secularity as ever. He may even love the frame-work of the service, and yet be unleavened by the essence of it. He comes out the same grovelling and terrestrial creature that he went in—with the full set and strenuousness of his heart upon the things which are beneath, and the complete withdrawment of his thoughts and affec- tions from the things which are above. We are not sure if his thoughts be very much if at all with God, even on his most solemn occasions of retirement from the world. But what the text affirms of him is, that he is without God in the world—and certain it is, that when the man comes forth again from his sanctu- ary of devotion, when leaving the church or the closet he casts himself as before among the rounds of ordinary life, when bills and bargains and companies and either the business or the handicraft of his calling take their accustomed place in the history of his affairs—then heaven and its glories vanish with the speed of lightning from the eye of a mind now closed in upon by the objects of an earthly scene, and desolated by these of all its godliness

II. We now proceed to show, in the next place, that the state of being without God is that in which man must ever con- tinue, so long as he is without Christ.

Under this head, too, let it be re- marked, that it is not to God having re- nounced us, but to us having renounced God, that we have been all along and still are recalling your attention. It is true, that, in virtue of our guilt, God has put us away from a place in heaven— but what we chiefly advert to throughout this discourse, is, that other and distinct effect of guilt, in virtue of which it is, that we have put God away from a place in our hearts. It is not to His having banished us from His presence, but it is to our having banished Him from our thoughts that we are now attending. It is quite true that the effect of sin on the jurisprudence of the sanctuary above, has been to separate man from the friend- ship of the Lawgiver; and that it is only the atonement by Christ which again re- stores him to acceptance and favour. But it is also true that the effect of sin on the habitual direction of the soul of man be- low, has been to separate God from the

regards and contemplations of the human spirit—and what we shortly propose under the second head is to show, that it is faith in the atonement of Christ, and this alone, which can restore God to the soul, as the object of its cordial and willing fellowship.

To perceive how this may be, let us ask you to remember how it is that you proceed with any object, be it animate or inanimate, the presence of which gives any sort of pain or annoyance to you. You would shut your eyes, or turn away your sight from a revolting object of disgust or deformity. You would, if possible, turn aside to escape an encounter on the street with the man whom you either hated or were afraid of. It is thus too that the mind is constantly, though perhaps unconsciously, on the defensive against the intrusion of such thoughts or images as are hurtful to its repose, or in any way disagreeable to it. If it could, it would rather shun the thought which is offensive, the contemplation which at all terrifies or disturbs it. Now this is the real secret of our spirit's habitual alienation from God. It is the sense of guilt which explains what otherwise would be a mystery in our constitution. While this continues to haunt us, we cannot view God otherwise than with jealousy and distrust—and, rather than have the disquietude of any such emotions, we would have God to be not in our view at all. We keep God habitually out of view, just that we may not be disturbed in our habitual enjoyment of the peace of nature. It is thus, if we may so express ourselves, that, hourly and minutely, we blink the thought of God. There is on the part of every mind a natural love of ease, and so, a secret yet strong recoil from every topic of contemplation which is fitted to disturb it. Now God apart from Christ is just such a contemplation. The very thought of Him, if He be at all apprehended as a God of sacredness and truth and inviolable majesty, is a thought of disquietude. The soul, if in any degree awake to a right sense of its own unworthiness, must be fearful of God—nor can it escape from the terrors of His offended dignity, but by lulling itself, among the opiates of sense and of carnality, into a profound oblivion both of His purity and of His power. There can be no kin regard where there is no confidence and how is confidence possible on th part of rebels, against whom the who force and authority of a righteous sov reign are armed for their destruction It is said of Adam that he hid himsel from the presence of God among th trees of the garden. We also, when lik to be obtruded on by the presence o God to our conscience or our thought do, by a movement almost instinctiv flee to hide ourselves. We too have ou gardens of vain security, our places o sweet and soothing forgetfulness, whic serve, to ourselves at least, the temporar purpose of a hiding-place from God. I they do not hinder Him from seeing u they at least hinder us from seeing Him and this does in the mean time, for a r spite from all those troublesome awaker ings, which might else have haunted ou spirits, and rifled away from them th rest and the enjoyments which we ar so fain to prolong. It is a fond illusion and the soul is not willing to break it u by any such frightful imagination as th of a terrific judge or august sovereign i heaven, with a face of rebuke and an u lifted arm of vengeance. No, it is gla to be embowered as it were in som grotto of concealment, so as to shut ou the hateful, the appalling demonstratio —and, in the heat and hurry of th world's business, or in the glee of i merry companionship, or in the ment engrossment whether of its pleasures o of its cares, it can at all times summo around itself enough of the imagery o this pleasing and peopled world, to scree from its view both the offended count nance of heaven above, and those drea characters of a coming misery which s in perspective on the death and the ete nity before it. It cannot by all its co trivances separate God from itself—b well is it able to separate itself, and, th by a wide and a constant interval, fro the thought of God. It can replenish i inner chamber with a crowd of phant sies and hopes and wishes, all rushin in upon it from the world that is witho and leaving no room for the descent o any serious or abiding impression fro the upper sanctuary. It is thus that, fro the cradle to the grave, the soul is rock as it were, amid the feelings and

fluctuations of a busy world, into profound insensibility toward Him who made the world. And it wills to have it so. It wants to hold no converse with images of disquietude; and none more so than the image of incensed and inflexible Holiness—none more so than the image of a consuming fire, ready to be discharged from heaven on all who have done offence to heaven's high Lawgiver—none more so than God out of Christ, at the sight of whom all the daring and defiance of the stoutest-hearted sinner will at length melt away; and the thought of whom is meanwhile ejected from his bosom, as a hateful visitant whose office it was to frighten and to annoy.

Such is the secret but substantial connexion which obtains between our dread of God, and the habitual distance at which we stand from Him. We gladly shut the mind's eye against all that is sinful—and, unless God stands forth in another aspect, we shall feel strongly and constantly disposed to stifle in embryo every thought that may arise within us of this tremendous because yet unappeased God. In a word, ere we shall willingly detain and habitually dwell upon the thought of God, He, from a sinful, must become a pleasing object of contemplation. Now this can only be, by the terrors of His countenance being softened and done away. This can only be, if not by dismantling Him of His truth and holiness and justice—at least of those mighty attributes, inflexible as they are, being in some way disposed of, as not to take the direction of vengeance against ourselves. This can only be, by the threats of judgment giving place to the assurances of friendship and the benignant offers of reconciliation. We cannot welcome to our hearts the thought of God, so long as the dread and the menace of a yet unsettled controversy be betwixt us. This question must be solved; or guilty nature will be at a wide and impracticable distance for ever—and, singly on its determination, there is suspended the alternative whether the children of nature shall be with or without God.

Now it is well to put it to the conscience of those who are without God, if they be not also without Christ. These two characteristics go inseparably together, and may be said indeed to be casually or efficiently connected. There is no fellowship with the Father, just because there is no fellowship with the Son. We appeal to those who, in the whole spirit and system of their lives, have been asunder from God, if they have not been equally asunder from Christ. This deserves to be well pondered by them—for it may suggest the all-important consideration, that, the estrangement of their souls from God in heaven, has been due to a like estrangement from that messenger who came charged with His calls and overtures to earth. Their habitual distance from the one, is resolvable into their habitual disinclination from the other. They are far from God, just because of their heedlessness to the voice of Him whose profest office is to bring them nigh. It is indeed a wondrous fact in their moral history, this perpetual exile of their spirits from Him who is the Father of spirits; but, as yet, they have missed the highway of communication to His august and inviolable sanctuary—even the way of a consecrated priesthood, of an ordained and accepted mediatorship. This relation of cause and consequence, between being with Christ and with God, may guide them to that mystic ladder, by which sinners may ascend to the abode of the Eternal. They still abide in the distance of nature from God—but this is just because they have never ventured, on the only stepping-stone, by which guilty nature can make its approaches to that Being of else unapproachable sacredness, from whom it is so deeply alienated. So long have they been without Christ, and just as long have they been without God. There is a connexion here worthy of being most seriously dwelt upon. Hitherto they have stood at a distance from the Father—but they have also stood at an equal distance from the Son; and the very reason why with God they have no fellowship, is, that in Christ they have no faith.

You will herein see the importance of their entertaining the gospel. It is called the message of reconciliation; but this message, when accepted, does more than reconcile—it regenerates. It is not only that the sinner's name is thereby expunged from the book of condemnation; the fears and the jealousies and the enmity

of nature to God are also expunged from the sinner's heart. There is a personal as well as a legal salvation accomplished through the intervention of Him, in whose blood we are invited to wash out our sins; and in the investiture of whose righteousness we are called upon to appear before the mercy-seat. That is a great judicial deliverance, by which the sentence of death is cancelled; and that is a great moral deliverance, by which the hatred and the terror and the sullen despondency of guilt are now done away. It is Christ crucified who hath accomplished the one. It is faith in Christ crucified which accomplishes the other—being that quickening touch which reanimates the coldness of man's alienated spirit, and recalls him to fellowship with God.

III. Let us now in a few sentences address this offered pardon of the gospel for the acceptance of you all. It is indeed a pardon held out to all who may choose to embrace and rely upon it—flung diffusively abroad as it were over the face of the whole earth; and there is not one individual of our guilty species, who is not welcome to place his steadfast and sure dependence thereupon. Let but this offer of kindness from God simply meet with the homage of confidence from man; and then there is opened up a channel of communication, through which there is nothing that shall intercept the flow of heaven's mercy—even upon those who in times past have most daringly trampled on heaven's law, and done most grievous offence to heaven's sacredness. It is the sure though the simple ligament, by which man is again united with the God from whom he had separated so widely. That ligament is Faith. God puts forth His offer of reconciliation; and man accepts of the offer, simply by the reliance which he puts upon its honesty. It is then that the reconciliation is entered upon. It is then that an act of agreement is struck between the parties, who are now the parties of a covenant where a faith on the one side that never falters, is sure to meet with a faithfulness on the other side that never fails.

This dispensation of mercy is compassed about with all the securities of a covenant. Never was transaction b tween one Being and another more richl guaranteed. The very designation of promise, as applied to the offered ble sings of the gospel, carries the oblig tion of a contract along with it. It i vests man to whom the promise is mad with a claim; and it stakes the truth an justice of the promiser to the fulfilmer of it. But when to this we add the firs securities, which have been establishe by the Mediator of the covenant—whe we look to Him, as having borne all th debts of sin, snd satisfied all the demanc of righteousness—when we recollect, n merely that mercy has been promise but that a ransom has been found; th the punishment which our Saviour d sustain, when He once offered Himse for the sins of men, cannot, even in ju tice, be executed over again; that th reward which he won, not for Himse but for others, cannot even in justice b withheld from them—then never, ma we safely conclude, never was title-dee to any inheritance so impregnably vali as that title-deed which believers do po sess to an inheritance of glory; and th framing of which constitutes the ma skilfulness which so often in the Ne Testament is ascribed to the economy the gospel. It is not mercy alone, b mercy in alliance with truth. It is n peace alone, but peace in conjunctio with righteousness. It is not a simp act of forgiveness alone, but of forgiv ness couched as it were in the honou of God's vindicated sacredness; and H one attribute of compassion irradiated b a lustre from all the other high attribut of a nature that is unchangeable. The are the leading peculiarities, which ser at once to characterise and to dignify t whole plan of our salvation; and, whi they maintain the character of God u violate, they rest the comfort and con dence of the sinner on the immutabiliti of a covenant which never can be broke of a word which can never pass away.

The calls of this free, but withal su and well-ordered covenant, you may ha hitherto resisted. Its character, as a m sage of gratuitous kindness to one a all of the human race, you have perha misunderstood. It is likely that some you may never have adverted to the p fect freeness, wherewith its invitatio

e made to circulate through the world. one of you are beyond the reach of its lcome and good-will; and could we int as specifically home to each as we w spread abroad among all the assu- ice of that blood which cleanseth from sin, and why not from yours?—then ould you awaken to a sense of friend- p with God, and, along with it, to the arm and power of a new moral exist- ce. If hitherto your consciences can , that you have lived without God in world; and that whereas He is re- sented as the Being with whom you ve to do, you in fact in the busy en- ssment of your manifold doings, have d Him in habitual disregard—then ely the gospel method of reunion and onciliation with that mighty Being, m whom you have all life long been ctically an outcast, is worthy of your st serious entertainment. O be at gth prevailed upon to seek after it, you shall find it worthy of all ac- ceptation. A sceptre of mercy is held out to you there. There God is stretch- ing forth His hands to you. He feels all the longings of a Father bereaved of his children, and He plies you with all the expostulations of a Father's ten- derness. What pleasure has He in the death of any one of you? It is a plea- sure He disclaims; and He protests of even the chief of sinners, that He would rather he should return to Him and live. He sends you bibles which circulate at large among your habitations; and from the pulpits of the land, there soundeth forth the declaration of a God that waiteth to be gracious. Many are the means, and many are the messengers whom He employs; and by the permanent institu- tion of a christian ministry in the midst of you, does He, from generation to gen- eration, perpetuate an embassy of peace to our world, by which to recall its suc- cessive wanderers to God.

SERMON III.

The Goodness and Severity of God.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God."—ROMANS xi. 22.

N the prosecution of this discourse, shall first endeavour to expose the iality, and therefore the mischief, of different views that might be taken he Godhead—and secondly point r attention to the way in which these vs are so united in our text, as to form ore full and a consistent representa- of Him. We shall then conclude a practical application of the whole ument.

One partial, and therefore mischiev- view, of the Deity, is incidental to e who bear a single respect to His attribute of goodness. They look to as a God of tenderness, and nothing In their description of Him, they a relish for the imagery of domestic —and, in the employment of which, ascribe to Him the fondness rather the authority of a Father. In the Divinity of their imagination, there is not the slightest approach to severity and far less to sternness of character, the very least degree of which would cause them to recoil from the whole contemplation— that they might forget, among the kin- dred and every day topics of their com- mon life, all that is repulsive or ungainly in the contemplation of sacredness. There is but one expression from Heaven's King which they will tolerate—and that is the expression of gentleness, and com- plaisance, and soft unvaried benignity. Ought that can ruffle or displease these is banished from their creed, or rather never found admittance there, because it was no sooner offered to their notice than all the antipathies both of inclination and taste were up in arms against it. The smile of an indulgent Deity is that where with they would constantly regale them selves, while the scowl of an indignan

Deity is that before which they would most carefully shut their eyes, rather than that it should give dread or disturbance to their bosoms. They would admit of no other aspect for religion than that of uniform placidness—and to decorate this bland and beauteous imagination the more, they would appeal to all that looks mild and merciful in the scenery of nature—a scenery which God Himself hath embellished, and on which therefore we might well conceive that he hath left the very impress of His own character. And whether, it may be thought, we look on soft and flowery landscapes, lighted up from heaven by sweetest sunshine—or towards that evening sky, behind the hues and inimitable touches of whose loveliness, one could almost dream that there floated isles of Paradise whereon the spirits of the blest were rejoicing—or, without poetic reverie at all, did we but confine our prospect to those realities by which earth is peopled; and take account of those unnumbered graces, which, in verdant meads, or waving foliage, or embosomed lake, or all the other varieties of rural freshness and fertility, lie strewn upon its surface—it may most readily be thought, that surely He at whose creative touch all this loveliness has arisen, must Himself be placid as the scene, or gentle as the zephyr that He causes to blow over it.

At present, we do not stop to observe, that, if the Divinity is to be interpreted by the aspects of nature, Nature has her hurricanes and her earthquakes and her thunder, as well as those kindlier exhibitions in which the disciples of a tasteful and sentimental piety most love to dwell. But we hold it of more importance to remark, that the illusion which is thus fostered, and by which God is exclusively regarded in the light of benevolence alone, is not confined to the sons and daughters of poetry. It is an illusion that might be recognised in humble life—and which we believe to be of extended operation, on the hearts and habits even of our most unlettered peasantry. There is a disposition amongst them too, to build upon the goodness, and to blink, if we may so express it, the severity of the divine character. They also ascribe a certain facility of temperament to Heaven's Sovereign—a sort of easy and good-natured connivance, of which they pra tically avail themselves—a placabili and promptitude to forgiveness up which they count, and on which we m add that many of them do draw to an e tent which is altogether indefinite; the by effacing the line of demarcation b tween sin and sacredness, and, on t maxim that God is ever ready to pardo holding it safe for them to transgress all times, up to the strength or urgen of the actual temptation. Througho all the classes of society, in fact, it is th beholding of the goodness without a h holding along with it of the severity God, that lulls the human spirit into fatal complacency with its own state a its own prospects. It is this which su tains the imagination of a certain vag and ill-defined compromise, between i dulgence from heaven upon the one han and the frailties of our earthly natu upon the other—and, in virtue of whic man might take to himself the liberty sinning just as much as he likes; a then of soothing his apprehensions vengeance by the opiate of this forwa tenderness on the part of God, just much as he stands in need of it. Su is the fearful state of relaxation, in whi this dislike for a religion of gloom, a this demand for a religion of cheerf ness and pleasure, are often found to la us in. It is this disposition to soften t menaces of the Lawgiver—it is this te dency to reduce, or rather to oblitera the vindictiveness of His nature—it this perpetual gloss that, by means of t argument of His goodness, is attempt to be thrown over the truth, and the ho ness, and the justice, and the high Sov reign state which compose the sever or the awfulness of His character—it this, in fact, which serves, in practice break down the fences between obedien and sin; to nullify all moral governme and so to confound all the distinctions b tween one part of the moral territory a another; and, by tampering as it do with the authority of the divine jurispr dence, to overspread the face of our wo with a deep and ruinous severity, at t very time, that, adrift from the restrai of heaven's law, each may be walking the counsel of his own heart, and af the sight of his own eyes.

So much for the mischief that mig

nsue by looking singly to the goodness f God, and apart from His severity. But here is also a mischief that will ensue, y our looking singly to the severity of God, and apart from His goodness. There are certain theologians who have hus arrayed Him; and that, not so much y the views which they have given forth f His inviolable sanctity—for none can tate too strongly, or too absolutely, His letermined recoil from the approaches of noral aid; but rather by the news which hey have given forth of such a dread nd despotic sovereignty, as to impress he conception of a fatalism that is inex-usable, a hopeless necessity against vhich all prayer and all performance of nan are unavailing. Neither do we nold them to be chargeable with any positive error; or, in the course of their dventurous speculation on the decrees f God, and the bearing which they have n the final destinies of the elect and the reprobate, to have affirmed ought that vas doctrinally or philosophically untrue. But there are truths which might be in-roduced unseasonably, and on the very ccasion when they are most liable to be rievously misunderstood and misapplied. And we do think, that, in the act of hold-ng converse with men, for the sake of aining their compliance with the invi-ations of the gospel, the matter on hand s the perfect freedom and frankness and incerity of these invitations—that then t is, when nought should be heard but he voice of welcome and of good-will, nd nothing should be said which might ountenance the imagination of an im-racticable barrier between sinners and he mercy-seat. However difficult it may e to adjust the metaphysics of the ques-ion, there is one thing unquestionable, nd that is, an amnesty from heaven ffered without exception to all—a pro-itiation set forth for the sins of the world; nd on which there is not one member f our world's population, who has not a varrant to cast the whole burden of his eliance—an embassy to our alienated pecies of which the record has come own to us, and by which God beseeches ven the guiltiest of men to enter into econciliation. And therefore we would, hat the representation were often given f a message which might circulate round the globe, and a sceptre of for-giveness held out in the sight of all its families—and we would not, that so much as one individual should be chilled into hopelessness by the dogmatism of a hard and unfeeling theology; or that, fancying some stern or repulsive inter-dict against himself, he should feel an arrest upon his footsteps, in his return to that God who waiteth to be gracious.

But, independently of all lofty specula-tion, and aside from the mysteries which attach to the counsels and determinations of a predestinating God, there is abroad on the spirits of men, a certain practical and prevalent impression of His severity, to which we believe that most of this world's irreligion is owing. For, how-ever strange, it is nevertheless a frequent anomaly of human feeling—that they who at one time can take comfort in sin under such an impression of His good-ness as will dispose Him to connive at it, have at all times such an overhanging sense of His severity upon them as never to attain a thorough confidence in His favour. In spite of every illusion, their conscience tells them that they are of-fenders; neither can they get rid of the suspicion, that they are not as they ought to be; and they are haunted by a secret jealousy of God, whom in spite of them-selves they regard as looking with an eye of jealousy upon them; and, just as a man will gladly shut his eyes against the spectacle that pains him, so will they shrink from the contemplation that only serves to put dread and disturbance into their bosoms; and thus there is a habi-tual distance kept up between the spirits of all flesh and Him who is the Father of them. There is the feeling of an un-settled controversy betwixt you and God; and just as you would rather avoid than encounter the man with whom you are not fully at ease, so you have the same motive for shunning all intercourse be-tween your own spirit and that of God's. The constant operation of this motive, will explain the constancy of your alie-nation from Him who made you. The world is your hiding-place from God. It charms you away from the thought of Him whom you are glad to forget—and the light of whose countenance would trouble you. Did it shine upon you in such characters of mercy as you would stedfastly trust and rejoice in, your heart

would ever be rising towards God, and with the very alacrity in which a man goeth forth to meet a friend. But, instead of this, you imagine a displeasure in His countenance; and you are not at ease in his presence; and, beholding the severity alone without the goodness, you feel it more tolerable for to live in the oblivion rather than in the remembrance of Deity; and thus in the midst of formal prayers, and of very fair and seemly performances, the inner man may be in a state of perpetual exile from Him who is the high and heavenly witness of all its thoughts and all its tendencies. This, in part, accounts for the sluggishness of nature—when called upon to stir itself up, that it may lay hold of God. There is a certain imagined frown upon His aspect which frightens it away—or lays a check on all its approximations to the upper sanctuary. Our distance from God is allied with our distrust in God; and there is a substantial though secret connection, in virtue of which it is, that the soul keeps habitually away from Him, just because the soul is habitually afraid of Him.

It may appear a mystery—yet, to the patient and profound discerner of our nature, we are persuaded that it will not appear a contradiction—should the same man both occasionally take comfort to himself in sin, under the thought of an indulgent goodness on the part of God; and yet habitually stand at a suspicious and mistrustful distance from Him, under the thought of His unrelenting severity. It is our very distance from God which sheds a dimness over His character and ways—over His wrath against disobedience, as well as over the gentler and kindlier attributes of His nature. Altogether, it is to man at best a shadowy contemplation; and so his imagination finds a certain pliancy in the materials that compose it. Whatever is dimly seen, can more readily and easily be disguised by the gloss, which, to serve a purpose, may at any time be thrown over it; and thus, to quell the remorse and terror of guilt, the severity of God may for the moment be put out of sight—even though this be the aspect in which we most habitually regard Him. And thus it is, that man takes his stand at the place of distance and obscurity, where, on the one hand, he might so fancy to himself a goodness in God as might yield enough of toleration for sin; and, on the other hand, might save him all the disturbance that he else would feel, on too near an approach to His severity or His sacredness.

II. Nevertheless, there is both a goodness and a severity; and this brings us to the second head of discourse, under which we proposed to point your attention to the way, in which these two views of the Godhead were so united in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as to form a more full and consistent representation of Him.

First, then, there is a severity. There is a law that will not be trampled on. There is a Lawgiver that will not be insulted. There is a throne of high jurisprudence that is guarded and upheld by all the severities of truth and of firm empire; and there is a voice of authority that issues therefrom, by which we are told that heaven and earth shall pass away, ere any one of its words can pass away. In the economy of that moral government under which we sit, there is no compromise with sin. There is no letting down of the judgment against it. The face of God is unchangeably set against evil, and either the evil must be sanctified into that which is good, or be wholly swept away. There is no toleration with God for the impure or the unholy; and it were a violence to his nature, did iniquity pass without a punishment or without an expiation. There may, by some mysterious conveyance, an access be found for his goodness to the sinner; but towards the sin, there is nought in the heart of the Godhead, save the most unsparing and implacable warfare. With sin, he can descend to no weak or unworthy connivance; and, dwelling as he does in lofty and unapproachable sacredness, He cannot deal with the guilty, but in that way, by which His justice shall be vindicated, and His law be magnified and made honourable.

In this respect, there is a steadfastness of principle, which runs throughout the divine administration, and from which the august Being who presides over it, was never once known to recede or to falter. In the whole history of His ways, we cannot light upon a single instance of God's so falling back from the severity of His denunciations against

sin, as at all to soften the expression of His hatred and hostility towards it. Not at the fall—when the one transgression of our first parent, was followed up by a curse that has burdened the earth and all its families for many generations. Not at the flood, which rained down from heaven, to wash away a wickedness from the face of our globe, that Heaven could no longer tolerate. Not at the promulgation of the Law from Mount Sinai, when the loud and the lofty challenge for obedience was made in the hearing of the people; and the smoke, and the thunder, and the voice gave felt demonstration of an authority which it were death to violate. Not at the entrance of Israel upon their promised land, when God, to avouch the truth and the terror of His judgment, gave forth his edict utterly to exterminate the sinful nations that were before them; and so the old, and the middle aged, and even the little ones, were destroyed. Not in the subsequent dealing of many centuries with His own perverse and stiff-necked children, among whom he sent pestilence and famine, and captivity, as the ministers of His vengeance; and against whom all His prophecies of evil were followed up by the sure and tremendous fulfilment of them. And lastly, not at that terrible period when the Jewish economy was at length swept away; and even the tears of a compassionate Saviour did not avert the approaching overthrow, but who, while He wept over the doom which He would not recall, gave most impressive exhibition, that, along with the goodness, there was also a severity with God. In all this, there is admonition for us to whom the latter end of the world has come; and, as we witness through the periods of its past history, how awful have been the threats of Heaven against the impenitent, and how unfailing the execution of them—let us beware of any flattering unction upon our own souls; and be very sure, that, on all the ungodliness of the present generation, the denounced judgment and the denounced vengeance are coming—though that judgment should be held amid the elements of dissolving nations, and that vengeance to the ruin of a wretched and undone eternity.

The great delusion is, that we estimate God by ourselves—His antipathy to sin, by our own slight and careless imagination of it—the strength of His displeasure against much evil, only by the languid and nearly extinct moral sensibilities of our own heart. We bring down Heaven to the standard of Earth; and measure the force of the recoil from sin in the upper sanctuary, by what we witness of this recoil, either in our own bosom, or in that of our fellow-sinners upon this lower world. Now if we measure God by ourselves, we shall have little fear indeed of vengeance or severity from His hands. For, save when there is gross and monstrous delinquency, we can bear very well both with our own transgressions and those of others—even although these transgressions should bespeak an utter alienation of the heart and life from God. We should never think, for example, of an acquaintance as the object of indignation—merely because he was a stranger to prayer and destitute of piety. For it so happens, that, while there be rare atrocities of character by the few, which awaken the horror and vivid indignation of the many—there is a habit of ungodliness nearly with all, and for which there is amongst them all the utmost mutual complacency and toleration. No man would ever think of vehemently denouncing another, just because he thought little of God; and the whole habits of his soul was that of estrangement from the things of Faith and of Eternity. He could view him with easy toleration notwithstanding; and the delusion is, that he is looked down upon with the same complacency from above, that he is looked upon by the men of his kindred and genial companionship here below. This is adverted to by the Psalmist; and from him we learn, that even what is so venial in our eyes as the mere forgetfulness of God, and for which there is such an entire sufferance here, that towards this there is the utmost severity there—"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes. Now, consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver."

Such is the alliance between our understanding and our heart, that man can

often succeed in believing to be true what he wishes to be true; and so there is a very wide and prevalent impression among men, that there is just the very disposition to tolerate our infirmities in Heaven, which we feel that we have need of, and have a demand for upon Earth. There is thus a very general security in the midst of ungodliness—no dread whatever of a coming wrath, and just because they have done nothing to incur the detestation of the world. The use of hell is conceived to be as a receptacle for the outcasts of society; and that, therefore, they have nothing to fear if they have not sunk to the crimes and the moral hardihood of outcasts. The Psalmist hath again said—"that the nations who forget God shall be turned into hell,"—and not only to you who are disgraced by profligacy; but even to you, who, busied with the occupations of this world, live in a state of total and practical unconcern about another world, would we address the language of our text, and ask you to behold the severity of God.

But along with this severity, there is a goodness that you are also called upon to behold; and if you view both aright, you will perceive that they do meet together in fullest harmony. It is this, in fact, which constitutes the leading peculiarity of the gospel dispensation—that the expression of the divine character which is given forth by the severity of God, is retained and still given forth in all its entireness in the display and exercise of His goodness. When He is severe, it is not because of His delight in the sufferings of His creatures, but because of His justice, and holiness, and truth. His delight is in the happiness of that sentient nature which He himself hath framed; and, except it be to the injury of these high moral attributes, He ever rejoices in scattering the fruits of His beneficence, over the wide extent of a grateful and rejoicing family. When He is vindictive, it is not because He derives a work of vengeance; but because the righteousness of His character, and the stability of a righteous government, demand it. Could He so manage, as that this lofty perfection, and the lofty interest which is connected therewith, should not suffer by it—could the sacredness of the Godhead, of which so direct a manifestation is given in His work of vengeance, be carried forward in as full and convincing manifestation to a work of mercy—could the justice, and the holiness, and the truth, all of which are set forth so evidently on a deed of retribution; could a way be devised, by which there may be inscribed as legibly, and be made to shine forth in indivated lustre on a deed of amnesty—then, we may be assured, that He who hath no pleasure in the death of children, but who hath sworn by Himself that He would rather they should live and rejoice in His presence for ever—that He, after such a way had been opened up and cleared of all its impediments, would pour along it of His grace, and His goodness, and cause them freely to descend and spread over even to the uttermost limits of His sinful creation.

Now it is this, and this precisely, which distinguishes the evangelical mercy that is gratuitously held out for the acceptance of all, from that general mercy in which so many do confide, but by which none can possibly be saved. Were we asked, in briefest possible definition, to state what that is, which impresses on the mercy of the Gospel its essential and specifying characteristic—we should say of it, that it is a mercy in full and visible conjunction with righteousness. With the pardon which it deals out for sin, it makes most impressive demonstration of the evil of it; and magnifies and does honour to the Law, by the very way in which it cancels the guilt that has been incurred by its violation. All the exhibition that God would have given of His character, by the wreaking of his severity upon the rebellious, is still given, unmarred and unmutilated, when, under the peculiar economy of redemption, He lavishes upon them of His loving kindness and tender mercy. And such is the policy of its constitution, such is the exquisite wisdom of its contrivance, that the mercy of the gospel meets with the truth of the law, and God can at once be a just God and a Saviour.

You know how, for this marvellous design, the economy of grace has been framed; but, knowing it though you do, there is not a believing soul that has experienced the power of this salvation, and felt its preciousness, who does not love

to be often told of it. That name, which is as ointment poured forth, will always bear to be repeated in the hearing of the faithful; nor does it ever pall upon the spirit of him who hath been visited with a sense of his sinfulness, and labours under the burden of it, though frequently the utterance is given, that unto him a Saviour has been born. On him did God lay the iniquities of us all. That sword of vengeance which should have been lifted up against us, He awakened in all its brightness against his fellow; and, in bowing himself down unto the sacrifice, Jesus Christ had to bear the weight of a world's atonement. The severity of God, because of sin, was not relaxed, but only transferred, from the head of the offenders, to the head of their substitute; and, in the depth of Christ's mysterious sufferings, has He made as full display of the rigours of His unviolable sanctity, as he would have done by the direct infliction of their doom on the millions for whom the Saviour died. The characters of truth, and justice, and holiness, instead of being effaced from this administration, stand as conspicuously blazoned forth, in the new economy of the Gospel, as in the old economy of the Law; and, with all the freeness and exuberance of its mercy, there is preserved the undegraded majesty of a government that cannot be dishonoured, of perfections that cannot be violated. It is true, that sinners are now permitted to draw nigh; but it must only be in the name of Him, who hath made full acquittal for Heaven's insulted authority; and, ample as is the pardon which they receive, it is without the compromise of Heaven's high sacredness—seeing that it is pardon, earned by a divine sacrifice, and sealed with the blood of an everlasting covenant. The Holy one of Israel now sitteth upon a throne of grace; but, approached as it can only be by the august and guarded ceremonial of a priesthood, and a consecrated mediatorship, not a sinner who draws nigh but must feel in his heart the homage, and render in his person and his services the fealty that is due to a throne of righteousness. He reads the inscription of peace between God and his own soul—but he reads it on that cross upon which the chastisement of his peace was borne. It is like the man who eyes the fierceness of a bursting volcano from some place of security where its flames cannot possibly involve him—and so he whom the tempest of God's wrath hath passed by because now discharged upon another, can now securely rejoice himself in the goodness, while in the cries, and tears, and agonies of his Redeemer, he beholds the severity of God.

Now, if you refuse the mercy of God upon this footing, you will receive it upon no other. It is for Him the offended, and not for you the offending party, to dictate the terms of reconciliation. And He tells us that no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son—while all who enter into His presence by the open door of His Son's mediatorship shall be saved. In other words you will never meet with acceptance from God, on the ground of His general mercy—while on the ground of His gospel mercy, you will never miss it. He is most ready to pardon, but not so as to extenuate the malignity of sin; and only so as to stamp the expression of His uttermost hostility on that evil thing, whose guilt in you He is most willing to pass by. Should you, in the distaste and disinclination of your spirit to the cross of Christ, keep by your general confidence, and nauseate the evangelical confidence away from you—should you count only on God's goodness to the sinner, while you shut your eyes upon His severity against sin, as manifested in the death of His Son—then does it still remain, that His severity must be manifested in your own death and everlasting destruction. It is the grand peculiarity of the gospel scheme, that while by it God hath come forth in love and tenderness to our world, He hath at the same time made full reservation of His dignity; and, along with the freest overtures of peace to the rebellious, there is the fullest reparation for every outrage which they have inflicted upon His government. On this footing He welcomes you, but on no other. He will not pass over your transgressions of His law, but in such a way, as shall compel your recognition of the law's unviolable right to all your obedience. He will not lavish upon you of His attribute of mercy, but in such a way, as shall constrain your homage to all the other lofty and

unchangeable attributes of His nature. He will not let you off for your violation of his commandments, but in such a way, as shall stamp indelibly the lesson of the commandments' unviolable sanctity.—This is that way of exquisite skilfulness, by which the economy of grace is characterised; and whereby at once the deepest stigma is affixed upon sin, and the guilt of the sinner is wiped away. It is a way that God Himself has found out—but if you conform not thereto, though the sure, it is the only way of reconciliation; and as you will not consent to take His goodness in the shape that he offers it—nought remains but that with the unbelieving Jews of my text, you shall be overtaken by the severity of God.

But let us not leave off, without assuring you once more, that there is a path of escape from this catastrophe, and a path opened for you all. The flaming sword at the gate of Eden, turns every way to intercept your approach to the tree of life; and the gospel of Jesus Christ turns every way save one—but that one is a passage by which every creature who now hears us, is invited to make good his entrance into the Paradise of God. That severity of God, on which we have so much insisted, so far from lessening or casting a shade over His goodness, only heightens and enhances it the more. It had to struggle away for the manifestation of itself—amid the conflict of all the other perfections of Deity. The mercy of the gospel is mercy in its highest possible exhibition—for it is a mercy that had to scale the barrier of such difficulties, as to every other eye but the eye of infinite wisdom looked impracticable—it is a mercy that, ere it could reach the world, had to wait the undertaking of Him who went forth upon the embassy to seek and to save it—it is a mercy by which God, to spare those guilty who had affronted and despised him, spared not His well-beloved Son; but endured the spectacle of that deep and mysterious agony, by which the penalties of a broken law were absolved, and the mighty problem was resolved of God being just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. And now that the mercy of God hath found its sure establishment on the foundation of his vindicated honours; now that the high demands of His authority and His truth have all been provided for; now that full demonstration has been given to men and to angels, of a sovereignty that could not be trampled on, of a jurisprudence that could not be violated; now that every let and hindrance is removed from the way of His darling attribute, is a voice heard from the mercy-seat,—the sound whereof reaches to the most distant places of our world, and the purport whereof is to recall to that Father's house from which they have departed, one and all of its alienated families.

III. We must now conclude with a short practical application. And first, such is the goodness of God, that it overpasses the guilt even of the most daring and stout-hearted offender amongst you. Let him even have grown grey, in iniquity, there is still held out to him the offer of that peace-speaking blood in which there resides the specific virtue of washing it utterly away. These words from the mouth of God Himself can yet be addrest to him, and to all who are in the body—"Come now, let us reason together—though your sins be as crimson they shall become as wool, though they be as scarlet, yet shall they be made whiter than the snow." There is none here present, whose transgressions are so foul and so enormous as to be beyond the reach of the Saviour's atonement. There is none so sunk in ungodliness, or who have drunk so deeply of the spirit of this world, that he may not, through Him who died the just for the unjust, be yet brought right and made alive unto God. There is none on whom the load of Heaven's displeasure hath so accumulated that he may not cast the whole of his burden on that foundation which is laid in Zion, and lightened of all his fears, may not rejoice in the presence of God as his reconciled Father. The very worst and most worthless among you are free to return unto Him—nay, have the word and the warrant of an express invitation; and, however far you have wandered in profligacy or shame from the sanctuary of His unpolluted holiness, still are you within the scope of his widely sounding call, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved."

But again, in very proportion to this goodness will be the severity of God on those who shall have rejected it. There is reconciliation to all who will—but, if ye will not, the heavier will be the vengeance that awaiteth you. The kindness of God is still unquenched, even by your multiplied provocations of His broken law—but quenched it most assuredly will be, if to this you add the tenfold provocation of His rejected gospel. The dispensation under which you sit is an alternative dispensation. The word which cometh out of the mouth of the Son of God will be likened to a two-edged sword. There is good-will for all who turn towards him. There is wrath, more intense and jealous and unappeasable wrath, for all who turn away. He is the savour of life unto life—or he is the savour of death unto death. He is a tried and precious stone, by leaning upon whom, you are upheld on the firm ground of acceptance with God; or He is a stone of stumbling on which you shall fall, or which falling upon you shall grind you to powder. "Kiss the Son then now, and while He is in the way, lest his wrath should begin to burn—when blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him."

And finally—let us warn you all, that no one truly embraces Christ as their Saviour, who does not submit to Him as their Master and their Lord. No one has a true faith in His promises, who is not faithful in the observation of His precepts. No one has rightly taken refuge in Him from the punishment of a broken law, who still heedlessly and presumptuously gives himself up to the violation of that law; for then shall he be judged worthy of a severer punishment—seeing that he has trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Your ordinances are an abomination, and the share that you take in solemnities and in sacraments will only serve to mark the deeper hypocrisy of your souls—if you rise not from the table of commemoration more devoted to the will of Him who is the great Master of the feast, and over the symbols of whose broken body, and whose shed blood, you propose to witness a good confession in the eyes of the world.* Draw near with a true heart, and He will draw near unto you. The very deliverance that He will give you from the fears of condemnation, will inspire alacrity and vigour in the way of new obedience. The exchange that you shall make of the spirit of bondage for the spirit of adoption, will be the translation of you into a new moral atmosphere—when you shall experience the difference that there is between the services which are prompted by affection and gratitude, and those mercenary services which are compelled from the unwilling by the rod of authority. You will be endowed with another taste than that which actuates the children of this world: and, as a fruit of the regeneration that springeth from a real belief in the Saviour, you will serve Him because you love Him, and do His will because you delight to do Him honour.

* Preached on the occasion of a Sacrament.

SERMON IV.

Salvation scarcely obtained even by the Righteous.

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear."—1 PETER. iv. 18.

THERE are men of no less than three distinct classes of character who have all a part in this brief but most impressive warning. First, the righteous, of whom it is said that they scarcely shall be saved. Secondly, the ungodly; and thirdly, sinners; of whom it is asked, where shall they appear? The two last have one common resemblance; but withal, they have certain separate characteristics, which it may be well to notice on the present occasion.

I. It is unnecessary to dwell on the signification of the term righteous in the passage before us—or to insist at any great length on the distinction which obtains between the imputed and the personal righteousness of those who believe. The one is perfect; and from the very first there is in it no scarceness, no shortcoming. The second is frail and humble in its commencement, doubtful and various in its progress, and has to struggle its uncertain way through defeats, and difficulties, and discouragements, ere it reaches its full consummation. By the one, we are delivered from the guilt of sin. By the other, we are delivered from the power of sin. In virtue of the imputed righteousness, our names are blotted out from that book of condemnation which is kept in the judicatory above. In virtue of the personal righteousness, the pollution of sin is washed away from the heart—and there is a busy work of holiness going forward on each genuine and aspiring pilgrim below. It is a firm and immutable certainty, that if a man believe, he obtains a judicial righteousness in Christ. But it is just as firm a certainty, that if a man believe, he obtains a personal righteousness in his own character. The one is just as indissolubly linked with his salvation as the other—and, if because gifted with the former, he rejoices in hope, and has a peace in his heart which passeth all understanding; then, because gifted also with the latter, he plies with utmost diligence and labour all the activities of the christian service, alike instant in duty and watchfulness and prayer.

Now, it is obvious, both from the text and from the context, that it is by their personal characteristics that the righteous are contrasted with the ungodly and the sinner. The judgment which begins with the former and ends with the latter, is a judgment which takes cognizance of personal qualities alone. On that day we shall be reckoned with for our doings—and the respective awards of the judgment-seat will proceed on the distinction, on the personal distinction which there is between them who obey and them who obey not. So that, in looking forward to that judgment-seat, our great aim should be to perfect our obedience, and to be diligent, that we may be found of Christ in peace without spot and blameless. It is thus, in fact, that we work out our salvation; not salvation from the punishment of sin, for this is effected by the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice—but salvation from the pollution and the power of sin, which is effected by our striving mightily according to the grace of God which worketh in us mightily. It is in the arduous prosecution of this work, that man presses onward to a mark for a prize, and feels how all his power and strength must be embarked in the undertaking, lest he should fall short of it; that, with much study and much strenuousness, he tries to bring himself nearer every day to an object which still lies in the distance before him; that, yet far beneath the summit of moral or spiritual perfection to which he is aspiring, he plies his toilsome ascent along the narrow and the rugged path by which he is led to it. And so, the images employed in scripture for the work of christianity, are expressive of most intense and sustained effort towards an attainment which after all may not be realised—a battle which requires complete armour, and the busy use of it, in order to secure the doubtful victory—a race which many run, but in which few will gain the prize—a narrow path, by which many shall seek to pass through the gate of life and not be able, and by which the few only who strive shall make good their entrance into the paradise of God. It is by dint of painful and assiduous striving that salvation is at length carried; and just as the courser may be said scarcely to have won, who, with the utmost of his power and fleetness hath made good his distance by a hair-breadth of space, or within a moment of time, so it is said of the righteous by the apostle in our text, that scarcely they are saved.

Now the question we have to put upon all this is, whether the righteous of our day, or those who deem themselves to be so, are really comporting themselves in a way answerable to such a representation? Are they running, so as that they may obtain? Are they fighting, so as that they may gain a hard-won victory? Are they striving, so as that they may force an entrance of great obstruction and difficulty? Where, we ask, are there any symptoms of a work and of

a warfare, or of that busy earnestness which a state of probation like ours would seem so imperiously to demand? There is a whole host of people, we are aware, who do stand forth and signalize themselves as the Religionists of the day. But amid all the pretence and profession by which they are distinguished, where is the practical exercise? Where the strenuous, the sustained effort that cometh out of desirous hearts and doing hands? How many or how few are there of these who are diligently plying at the real task-work of christianity?—who are making a business of their sanctification?—who are labouring for Heaven, as if pursued by the conviction that without labour they will never make it out, and that even after their utmost labour, they will but save their distance, and scarcely reach the goal which they are tending to? Surely, if they proceeded on this view of the matter, their appearance altogether would be that of men upon the stretch—of men, all whose faculties were pressed into a mighty service—of men in a state of constant and great urgency, on a way beset with many obstacles, and their progress through which required the forthputting of all their strength, and of all their busy expedients. Now we scarcely see this degree of intensity any where. Not certainly among all, if indeed among any, of those who are called the professing people. They have more the semblance of men who have been lulled to sleep by the sound of a pleasant song, than of men who have been roused into action by a spirit-stirring call. Their orthodoxy has acted rather as a sedative than a stimulant. It has cradled them into a state of repose rather than brought them out into a state of exertion. They are more like men under the power of an opiate, than of men who, awoke from lethargy, and now in the attitude of readiness for service, have their loins girded about and their lamps burning.

Christianity is grievously misunderstood, whenever it is imagined that all this activity and labour are not called for. They are sadly misled by their creeds and their systems, who fancy the death of Christ to be that terminating object, in which the believer has only to rest and do nothing. Instead of this, it is the starting-post of a busy career, whence the Christian breaks forth with hope and alacrity on all the services of a new obedience. "Christ gave himself for us," says the apostle, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The faith of the gospel so enlarges the heart, as to make him by whom it is actuated, run in the way of the commandments. There is nought, surely, of indolence in this. The work which it is given a Christian to do, is not a work done so easily, that it may be lightly, or carelessly, or superficially gone about—but a work done with such exceeding difficulty, that they who do accomplish it, accomplish it but scarcely, and so it is but scarcely that they are saved.

To keep the heart with all diligence—to keep the heart in the love of God—to dwell with ever-recurring contemplation on those objects of faith by which gratitude and affectionate loyalty, and all the purposes of new obedience are upholden—to keep a strict and resolute guardianship over the inner man, amid the temptations by which it is both plied from without, and most insidiously operated upon from within—to watch over the infirmities of temper, the perpetual aberrations of selfishness and vanity—to follow after peace when surrounded by provocatives to war, to maintain charity in the midst of cruelest provocations—to be patient under calumny and injustice; and master that most difficult of all achievements, the love of enemies who have hurt or affronted or betrayed us—to bid away all the incitements of sensuality, so as both to have purity in the heart and temperance in the habits, in the presence of a thousand besetting solicitations: In addition to these labours of the unseen Spirit, to fill the whole history with the doings of a visible obedience—to labour in our closets, to labour in our families, to labour in the ordinances of religion, to labour in the attentions and the offices of social intercourse, to labour in the visitations of liberality and kindness, to labour yet with a spirit schooled out of all its worldliness in the business of our callings—these, these are the tests of Christianity here; and these, when done to the glory of God, and in the name of Jesus, will be the triumphs of Christianity hereafter

These are the treasures laid up for us in Heaven—not as forming our title-deed to that glorious inheritance of the saints, but as forming our meetness for its exercises and its joys. All the possible acts and virtues of humanity put together, cannot build up a claim to Heaven; but they build up the indispensable character of Heaven. They compose not that imputed righteousness of Christ which is the meritorious plea; but they compose that personal righteousness of his disciples which is their essential preparation. And it is the magnitude of that preparation; it is the loftiness, the spirituality of that law, with the graces and perfections of which they are called upon to clothe themselves; it is the mighty range or extent of a commandment whereof the Psalmist says, that it is exceeding broad—these make the work and the labour of Christianity such that it scarcely can be done—these, as constituting the salvation of believers from sin unto righteousness, give emphatic truth to the saying, that the righteous scarcely can be saved.

Now the first class of believers who ought to feel the force of this representation, are they who have embraced the faith of the gospel. What an impressive warning to all such that it is but scarcely they shall be saved! You may win, but hardly, and as if within a hair-breadth. Now to make this out, are you working hardly? Does your seeking amount to any thing like striving? Are you at all like men putting forth your whole might for carrying some point of difficulty? When the fortress stands in a position that is nearly impregnable, we find that all the strength and all the tactics of besiegers are put forth in the business of storming it. Is the kingdom of Heaven, we ask, suffering this violence at your hands; and where are your high resolves, your busy expedients, your struggles and your onsets for taking it by force? Where are your ardent prayers for strength; and then, the stirring up or the putting forth of that strength which is in you for great and arduous performances? And, do you watch as well as pray? It is not the devotion of a little time in the morning, followed up by an utter relaxation of spirit through the day—It is not the observation of all the Sabbath punctualities followed up by a week of earthliness—It is not the sacramental decency, or even the sacramental fervour, followed up by a year, throughout the general tenor of which, you breathe like other men the air of this world's business and this world's companionship—It is not thus that you acquit yourselves like servants, who, as if under the immediate eye of Heaven, are working and waiting for their Lord. Awaken, awaken, then all ye, who sit at ease in Zion, if ye would escape the fearfulness which shall overtake the hypocrite, the doom of those who say, Lord, Lord, while they do not the things which he says.

II. Now if such be the ordeal which even the righteous must undergo, what must become of the ungodly? If the former can scarcely pass the judgment in safety, how is it possible that in that judgment the latter can stand? It begins, it would appear, at the house of God, and there it so searches and scrutinizes, that it is but hardly and by a little way, that many, even of Christ's own disciples, shall be found on the right side of the line of demarcation. It ends with those who stand afar off from the precincts of holiness or of heaven, and among them it will be a consuming fire. If the saints, with all their prayers and pains and struggles upon earth, shall but have won their distance by a hair-breadth, and by their much strenuousness have forced, and scarcely forced their admittance within the door of the kingdom—ah! what will become of those sinners, the care of whose souls cost them no strenuousness, who live here as they list, and make this evanescent world their resting-place, without an effort or a wish beyond it. Surely, if among God's own people the sacred jealousy of His nature act as a refiner's fire, to separate the almost from the altogether Christian, it must go forth in one mighty and devouring tide of conflagration among the hosts of the rebellious.

Our purpose in distinguishing the ungodly and the sinners into two classes, is if possible to excite salutary alarm in the breasts of those, who imagine of themselves that they are not sinners—who at least imagine of themselves that they are not in danger, because in reputation and good will among men,

they are free from the disgrace of all gross and notorious delinquencies. They lie not. They steal not. They oppress not the poor; nor do they violate either the equities of business or the proprieties of good neighbourhood. It is a most frequent, nay a most natural delusion among such, that they are not great sinners—and for this best of all reasons that they are chargeable with no great sins. They will not admit the magnitude of their guilt—neither will they admit the magnitude of their danger, till some specific or definite transgression can be alleged against them. In the absence of these they feel a complacency in their present state, and are visited with no disturbance at least, in the contemplation of their future prospects. They stand alike exempted from remorse and terror. And it serves to foster this tranquillity of spirit more, if to the absence of all which they deem to be positively bad, they add the presence of much that is positively good in their character—if they be amiable in the relations of domestic and social life, if they be kind and companionable among their fellows, if they be erect and untainted in honour, if they be trusty in friendship, if they be devoted in patriotism.

These are the virtues which uphold, nay beautify the societies of the earth—but what we affirm of one and all of them is, that they do coexist with ungodliness. Along with the presence of these social moralities, there may be the absence or utter destitution of all the sacred moralities. That is a pleasing light which is struck out by the mere workings of instinct in the hearts and among the habitations of men. But it differs from that light which cometh down from the upper sanctuary. The one is no more like to the other than the tiny lustre of the glow-worm is like unto the firmament's meridian blaze. There may be nought of the celestial in this earth-born virtue; and it is a possible, nay a frequent, thing that men shall live and breathe in its atmosphere, yet live without God.

Now, it is for the sake of grouping these men into a company by themselves, that we view the ungodly of our text, as separate from the sinners of our text. They in truth form a distinct class of society—accomplished, and perhaps brilliantly accomplished in the moralities of earth, yet without one thought or one visitation in their spirits of any practical earnestness about the heaven that lies beyond it—free of all those sins which would be termed delinquencies in the world, yet most surely as free of all devotedness in their hearts to Him who made the world—surrounded by the regards of kindness and the obeisances of respect in their neighbourhood below, yet living in a perpetual exile of the affections from Him who is above, at once the Father and the Judge of the human family—lulled into complacency by the thought of the many duties and the many decencies whereof they acquit themselves, yet hastening onward to that day of account, when tried by the question, "What have you done unto God?" they shall be left without a speech and without an argument. Surely, if they who have cared and striven and sought after God all their days, yet after all are but scarcely saved—well may it be asked, what shall become of those who have never cared? If with the one there be such difficulty of salvation, what are we to conclude of the other, but that with them there is the certainty of damnation? If it be with so much ado that the righteous pass through the ordeal of their coming judgment, how is it possible that the ungodly can stand?

We are not charging you with aught which the world would call monstrous. We charge you only with the negatives of character. You have no practical, no perpetual sense of God. We are not speaking of your vices. We speak only of your defects. You are deficient from seariedness. It is not by your profligacies, but simply by your negations that we describe you. You have no godliness, or you are ungodly. Your consciences can tell, whether such be a just representation of yourselves. It can make palpable the difference between the habit of your souls, and that of those whose eye, and the aspiration of whose heart, are ever towards the upper sanctuary—whose delight is in communion with God, and whose chief dread it is to offend Him—who bear upon their spirits at all times a reverential impression of His sacredness; and who strive, with all their vigour and all their vigilance, to uphold

that frame of the affections, which most befits the expectant of heaven, and best prepares for its holy services. You can best say if it be thus with you; and whether you now realise those longings and those labourings of the life of faith, by which all the feelings of the inner man, and all the doings of the outer man, are consecrated to the business of a high calling. Even they who are the most strenuous and the most devoted in this business of piety—even they but scarcely shall be saved; and what, we repeat, can become of those, who, from their cradles to their graves, do but grovel in the dust of that earth which they tread upon, and live without God in the world?

Think not then, that you might sleep on in safety because you have had no crimes. That judgment which shall at length awaken you, will fall in weightiest vengeance upon your head, if it but find you in a state of negation and nakedness. You fancy, that you have done nothing against God. But it is enough that you have lived without God. You are not conscious of such disobedience as any distinct or specific act of rebellion. But enough, that you have not yielded obedience to His reign. It will be vain to allege that you never were a rebel against Him, if He can allege that He never had the rule over you. They are your own wills that have ruled you. It is by the waywardness of your own affections that you have walked. It may not have been on a way of profligacy or on a way of scandalous profaneness; but still it was your own way, and not His way. You have carried it all your lives long, independently of God. Perhaps without any gross violation of the decencies of life, but then you have a taste for decency. Perhaps without any glaring infraction of the integrities of business; but then, you have a native principle of integrity. Perhaps with an habitual homage to the voice of society, and even an occasional homage to the voice of your own conscience; but reckless all the while to the voice of God, and relatively to Him, in as deep a slumber of unconsciousness as if He were a nonentity or a phantom. Now, you refuse to hear the voice of His rightful authority; and so afterwards you shall be made to hear the thunders of His righteous condemnation.

III. So much for the subtle delusion of those who are ungodly, but feel not themselves to be sinners—and just because, whatever may be the hidden delinquencies of their spirit, there are no specific delinquencies of outward conduct with the matter of which they are chargeable. He who ventures upon the latter kind of disobedience, belongs to a distinct genus of character from that of mere ungodliness. And hence the distinction we would make between the ungodly and the sinner. The one simply cares not for God. The other, more resolute, lifts against Him an open defiance. The one, led by his own will, can perhaps only be charged with the distance of his affections from the person or character of God. The other, in formal and active resistance to the Divine will, may be charged with the despite done by his actions to the authority of God. The one is only disaffected. The other is more, he is disobedient: and while the former is but upon the neutral ground of indifference to God, the latter has planted his daring footstep within the distinct and the declared landmark of a forbidden territory. Such is the difference between him who is ungodly, and him who is a transgressor. The one is destitute of the feeling of loyalty. The other, more stoutly rebellious, hath broken the laws. He hath more outraged Heaven's high sovereignty. He hath more braved, and bid defiance to the authority of God.

It is the more visible nature of his delinquency which lays him opener to the conviction of sin, than the man of decent morality, yet withal rooted ungodliness; and thus also would we explain the declaration of Christ, that publicans and sinners enter the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees. They are more easily conscience-stricken, just because their sins are more conspicuous. Their fraud, or their falsehood, or their drunkenness, or their impurity, or their sabbath profanations, or their blasphemies, or their acts of oppression and violence; these are more glaring insignia of revolt against the government of Heaven, than is the

latent, the lurking ungodliness of a worldly moralist—even though it should leaven his whole heart, and thoroughly impregnate every deed of his history. Both will be reckoned with on the great day of manifestation—the one by the secret things of his heart, which shall then be revealed; the other by the deeds done in his body, which shall then be judged. But the inward secrets may not be palpable now while the outward deeds are abundantly so. The apostle makes a distinction between those sins which are open before-hand, and those which follow after. It is a distinction realized by the ungodly and the sinner of our text. The rebellion of the former has its firm though unseen hold in the recesses of his bosom The rebellion of the latter is written in such characters upon his forehead as may be seen and read of all men.

It is thus, that while often difficult to awaken conviction in the hearts of the mere ungodly—the heart of the sinner may be reached by reading to him in the deeds of his history his own character; and by reading to him, in the character of these deeds, the tremendous destiny which awaits him. It is thus that we would try to lay an arrest on the career of the transgressor. We would appeal to his own consciousness of his own doings. We would remind him of the sabbaths that he has violated, or of the execrations that he has poured forth, or of the impurities and excesses that he has indulged in, or of the dishonesties in business that he has committed, or of the relative duties that he has broken, or of the calumnies, whether heedless or malignant, wherewith he has soiled a neighbour's reputation. We need not speak to him of the ungodliness that is in his heart, when things like these have broken out upon his history—the overt-acts of rebellion—the expressions of a distinct and declared warfare against Heaven's throne. And O, if he but knew the inviolable sacredness of Him who sitteth thereon—of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and before the rebuke of whose countenance all the derision and defiance of the hardiest in wickedness must at length melt away—surely he would judge it better to recall himself in time, than to appear with all the aggravations of his uncancelled guilt before the judgment-seat. The voice of welcome and of good-will still calls upon him from his mercy-seat; and that God, the book of whose remembrance is laden with the record of his misdoings, is still willing that they shall all be blotted out in the blood of the great atonement: and if he will only break off his sins by righteousness and turn him to Christ who is mighty to save, the way of renovation is yet open; and the great Lawgiver, whom he has so often offended, beckons him to draw nigh and taste of His graciousness Such is the offer now: but let both the sinner and the ungodly recollect, that this season of opportunity will soon pass away. The invitations of God's tenderness will give place, and that speedily, to the terrors of a vengeance which will burn all the more fiercely because of a slighted gospel, and a rejected Saviour. Be alive then to the urgency of the present call, to the power and the encouragement of the present invitation. Kiss the Son while He is in the way—lest his wrath should begin to burn—when blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him.

SERMON V.

On the Spirit's striving with Man.

"And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man."—GEN. vi. 3.

WHEN man is prevailed on to follow the call of the Gospel, he does it on the impulse of certain considerations. Interest, for example, may have some share in moving him to this step; but this it could not have, unless he saw his interest to be involved in it—or, in other words, unless he believed in the unseen matters

of a judgment and an eternity. Duty may have some share in moving him; but this it could not have, unless he was visited with a relenting sense of his obligation to that God, whose will he had so often forgotten, and whose requirements he had so often trampled on—or, in other words, unless the conscience were made more tender, and the heart of stone were made more soft and susceptible than it ever had been, up to the decisive moment of his embarking his every desire and his every purpose, on that path of obedience which leads to the Jerusalem above. Now, it is to be remarked, that all the considerations both of duty and of interest might be presented to a multitude of people in the same language, with the same impressiveness of tone and of vehement affection on the part of the speaker, and with all the same external advantages on the part of the hearer; and yet, in point of fact, there is not a more familiar exhibition of human nature, than that the movement of the very same engine should carry along with it a prevailing influence on certain individuals of this multitude, while, with certain others, the influence felt at the time and acted on for the time, is at length lost and overborne amongst the concerns of the world, and the urgency of its manifold temptations.

Now, there must be a cause for this difference; and it is not enough, to assign as the cause the mere variety of original character and constitution among those, who are within the reach of a hearing. There can be no doubt that this has an effect; but still the effect is not such as may not be completely overruled, by a cause that is paramount to all the previous varieties of character whatever, and a cause that can get the better of all the resistance which the hardiest and the worldiest of minds may offer to the power of that truth which is brought to bear upon it. There are repeated instances, in the history of the church, of the unlikeliest and most stubborn of men, surrendering themselves to the power of a gospel argument, which has fallen on the conscience of one who had apparently a more impressible constitution, without fruit and without efficacy. And to suspend you no longer on this topic, we give it you as one of the clearest announcements of Scripture—that while, in the administration of Heaven's kingdom upon earth, the bible, and the minister, and the various ordinances of religion, are set agoing as so many visible instruments for turning man from the power of Satan unto God—it is that spirit which bloweth where He listeth, who gives to these instruments all their success, and all their energy. And, without stopping at present to resolve all the interesting questions which follow in the train of this most important doctrine, we feel, that we are only uttering the words of God's own authoritative revelation, when we say, that, wherever an impression is kindled in a human bosom on the side of what is right, or penitent, or pious, there, through the medium of some secondary cause or other, the Spirit of God has been at work. And in every movement of conscience, in every pang of self-reproach, in every visitation of a compunctious tenderness, in every conception of a better purpose, in every longing of the soul after a conformity to the law of heaven, in every upward aspiring of the heart under all the darkness and all the passion by which it is encompassed, do we recognize a manifestation of the Spirit's influence, a trace of His unseen but most undoubted agency, a struggle in that contest which is now going on between the powers of heaven and of hell for the dominion of this world; and upon the issue of which contest in the soul of each individual it will depend, whether he remain in captivity to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; or renewed in his mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, he be rescued from that universal wreck which has come upon the species, and be exalted into a monument of that Redeemer's triumphs, who has undertaken the work of our deliverance, and, for that greatness of strength which He put forth is the execution of it, has obtained for His reward, that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Now it may require some attention from you, to perceive the precise kind of responsibility, which this view of the matter lays on one and on all of us. Were a charge committed to me by some rightful superior in an unknown tongue, I incur no fault towards him, though I

fail to acquaint myself of the articles of this charge. But conceive an interpreter to step in between me and him, and to translate the whole of his instructions into my vernacular language; and then should I persist in my neglect, I land myself in all the guilt of disobedience. Or, what brings it still nearer to the topic on hand, conceive me to be labouring under such a deafness, that I cannot possibly hear the feeble voice of my master, as he delivers his commission to me; but that I am able to understand it by the more powerful enunciation of a third person, who acts as an assistant in this business of communication betwixt us. Or, what perhaps is a still more precise approximation, conceive me to be ignorant of the authority and blind to the claims of him who is laying his commands upon me; but that another explains the matter so as to make me sensible of his moral and legitimate right to the whole of my obedience. Then you can be at no loss to feel, how, whatever palliations might be devised for my want of subordination to the will of my superior, had there been no intermediate link of interpretation, or of exposition, or of audible conveyance betwixt us—yet, with such a link, every such palliation is done away; and the more faithfully and laboriously and patiently the office of an interpreter has been discharged, the more does it go to aggravate the blame of him, who, with all these advantages, still refuses the rightful call of his rightful superior, and turns in contempt and disobedience away from him.

Now it would suspend our immediate object, did we attempt at present what we think can be done by the united force of reason and Scripture, to pour the light of a thorough explicitness into all the subtleties of this interesting argument. We will not therefore say at present, in how far man, because labouring as he does under a moral blindness of perception, and sunk in all the stupidity of a constitutional alienation from God, is, on that account, to be held less guilty of rebellion against Him by his life of prone and habitual disobedience. But, sure we are, that it would take away from the whole force of the apology, were some secret and invisible power to open at times the eye of his mind to the high titles and authority of the Godhead; and he with his eyes so open, to put his daring footstep on that forbidden ground which is fenced about by the prohibitions of the Divine law. Or, were this power to touch his heart by some sense of dutiful obligation to his Maker; and he, stifling the whole of its urgency, were to forbear an entrance upon the way of the commandments. Or were this power to lay before him, in clear and resistless manifestation, the spectacle of an inviting God, plying His wandering prodigal with all the tenderness of entreaty, and assuring him on the pledge of His own Son given up to the death for us, that if he turn in repentance to the God he has strayed from, all will be forgiven and all will be forgotten; and he, unmoved out of his obstinacy by the whole weight of this fatherly expostulation, were to refuse the proffered kindness, and unmindful of the call from heaven, were to walk in the counsel of his own heart and in the sight of his own eyes. Now there is such a power at work with us all. We see Him not, but we have the experience of His agency in the effect it has on our hearts and consciences. This is the only way in which His interference may have been at all sensible to you—even by a movement of conscience, when it pointed to you the path of duty, or charged on you the guilt of your manifold deviations. All of you must have the remembrance of such movements. There is not one of you, who has not felt in your past history, a visitation of this kind on your ever busy and ever thinking spirits. And there is not one of you who has been in the habit of resisting these visitations, who does not feel, how, in the progress of this resistance, the moral sense gets more languid in its admonitions; and the monitor within emits a gentler voice; and the impression of the present guilt and the future danger is ever decaying into a fainter and a feebler influence; and that horror at sin, which was fresh and powerful at the outset of life, is subsiding into a hardened insensibility; and, for the tenderness of youthful conscience, and youthful apprehension, there is now perhaps the front of an audacious rebellion—an iron remorselessness of soul which can now sin for itself without a sigh, and behold the sin of others without

one movement of concern or of sympathy. Now if you look no farther than to the phenomenon of conscience within you, you will look on this as the natural progress of its hardening; and on this progress, an argument may be founded for immediate repentance. But the Bible teaches us to look farther. It connects every phenomenon both of matter and of mind, with the invisible power which gives birth to it. It refers every moral movement towards God in the heart of man, to the visitation of God's Spirit, acting the part of an enlightener or adviser or persuasive monitor, who plies His suggestions and His arguments with the men of a perverse and obstinate generation. And thus it is that we are called to grieve not the Spirit, to quench not the Spirit, to provoke not the Spirit to abandon us to our own wilfulness, to make not the Spirit angry by our contempt for His warnings and our resistance to the voice of His authority. It is alarming indeed, to be told of the natural progress of the conscience, in becoming hardier and more insensible by every act of resistance to its dictates. But it forms a distinct and a powerful addition to the argument, when we think of these dictates being set forth by the Spirit of God, who is a willing and a knowing and a living and a personal agent; that we by our resistance tire His patience, and tempt Him to leave us to ourselves, and bring hardness down upon our hearts in the way of a judgment; if that to-day we hear not His voice He may not come to-morrow, or if He do come may knock more deafly than ever at the door of our hearts, and emit a fainter and a feebler whispering; that if now we mind not the things which belong to our peace, He will become less loud and less frequent in His admonitions, He will gradually die away from us into a final departure, He will let us alone, and leave us to the perverseness of our own ways and the infatuation of our own counsels.

The first argument for immediate repentance turns upon the fact, that the soul, by every fresh act of resistance against the admonitions of conscience, gathers the metal of a stouter and a hardier resistance in all time coming. The second argument turns upon the fact that the conscience itself is every day becoming less powerful, and less frequent, and less urgent in its admonitions; and if you connect these admonitions with the living and the personal agent, who, by whispering to the human mind through the organ of conscience, is the real though unseen author of all its suggestions—you bring every individual amongst us into the same relation with the Spirit of God, that subsists between him who lies under certain duties and obligations, and him who fulfils the office of his friendly and advising superior. The Spirit takes upon Himself the office of persuading us to all that is most righteous towards God, and of course to all that is most beneficial to ourselves. In the discharge of this office, there is the exercise of much kindness and patience and tender benevolence. If we act faithfully and zealously on the advice of this day, He will treat us as hopeful subjects for the advice of another day. He will persevere in His services, and reiterate His admonitions; and to us who have made a right use of the teaching we have received, more will be given. And this harmonizes with all that we experience of the visible effect of this invisible influence. He who betakes himself most scrupulously to the following of his conscience, is every day receiving from it the light of clearer and more abundant intimations. The monitor within becomes every day, by reason of use, more judicious and enlightened; and more able to indicate the path of duty, and to lead us a clear and a confident way through all the embarrassments of a darkening casuistry; and, in return, as it were, for our faithful application of its more elementary lessons, does it deal them out in larger and surer and more abundant manifestations. The conscientious performance of what we do know, is rewarded by a more satisfying revelation of what we do not know. And thus it is, that we so often behold the progress of a true believer, to be from the fearful scrupulosities of a yet unsettled and unconfirmed babe in Christ, to that firm purpose, that intrepid decision, that bold and immediate energy of conduct, which bespeak the full assurance of a mind that knoweth the right from the wrong, and promptly betakes itself to the line of its own just and righteous determination

If any man keep my sayings to him will I manifest myself. If any man serve me, he shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. These and such as these are most interesting passages. They unfold the connexion which the Author of the Gospel has established, between advancing obedience and advancing spiritual discernment. Follow out the dictates that have already been clearly put forth to you; and this will be followed up by a more copious supply of instruction than you have ever yet received. Walk after the present leadings of your conscience, or rather of the Spirit to whom conscience is the organ or channel of conveyance; and He will lead you still farther: And thus it is, that you grow from the first rudiments of the Christian practice, to the strength and the stature of manhood; and are carried forward from the tottering feebleness of one who is in the infancy of his acquirements, till you are made to stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

Now mark the opposite result of that conduct, by which we turn a deaf ear to the voice that is within us. We not only disobey the voice, but we stifle it. In the whole of this business we have to do with one who is pleased with our attention to Him, and rewards it by the growing clearness and frequency of His intimations. But should we withhold our attention, He in time will withhold His intimations. My Spirit will not always strive with the children of men. It is thus it will be found in the great day of account that He is clear of the blood of all the families upon earth. It will be found that over the whole face of an alienated world, deep as its spirit of slumber may be about the things of God, it will be found that He has done enough to awaken it. It will be found, that, with the mighty instruments of the law written in the heart and the law written in the record of heaven's messengers, He has made His ample round through all the tribes of this world's accountable population, and has knocked at the door of every conscience; and there is not a man who will have Him to blame for the undoing of his eternity. He has given to each some distinct suggestions or other, which he himself felt to be invested with all the authority of a rightful command; and which, had he followed, the spirit of God would still have kept by him and plied him with his further communications. But he did not follow it, clear as it was even to his own sense of right and wrong; and therefore it is, that on that great and decisive day, his condemnation will have a clear principle to rest upon. He will be tried by the light that was put within his reach, and which was withdrawn from him only because he had not the uprightness and the morality to walk in it; and therefore it is that in him is fulfilled the saying, that he who hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. And thus it is, that every act of known and wilful disobedience, throws a darkening cloud over the path of duty; and smothers the admonitions of the inward voice; and makes the Spirit of God less frequent in His visitations; and hastens to the soul that awful consummation of being let alone, or of being finally abandoned to its own desperate impenitency. And therefore do we urge you to follow out every one step and purpose of repentance that conscience is now laying upon you; and that not merely because we anticipate in future a hardier resistance to its dictates, but we anticipate the progressive feebleness of a decaying and perhaps of an expiring conscience. Or, in other words, we know that He who suggests to it all its admonitions, and arms its voice with all the energy that belongs to it, may at length be driven by your perverse and ungracious treatment of Him to abandon His office altogether, and to leave the chamber of that mind where sin reigns uncontrolled and fills the recesses of the inner man with its dark and unhallowed imagery,—leave it with all its rebellious affections unrebuked by His presence and unblest by any of His future visitations.

This is not an aerial speculation. What we have now asserted may be seen by us all, fixed and exemplified on many a living subject. There are men to be met with at all times, crossing our daily path, and sitting down with us in the social party, and entering into talk with us in the room of public resort, and into negotiation with us at the market-place—who are just in that very state of abandonment which we have now been

describing. You may not have been in the habit of looking upon them, as men of whom you could say, that the Spirit of God had given them over. But this is only because you have not adverted to the fact—that it is this Spirit who is the real, though secret and unnoticed author, of every movement of principle; of every suggestion of conscience; of every check of self-reproach; of every arresting call, by which the mind is directed to seriousness, and is led to bethink itself of God, and is visited by a sense of the present guilt and the coming judgment, and is in any way brought under the power of a religious consideration. We are sure, you must allow, that there is not a more familiar exhibition amongst your fellowmen, than of one who is built up in an ease and in a security, to which the monitor within offers no disturbance whatever—of one who does, and is in the deliberate habit of doing, what is clearly and undeniably wrong; but whose conscience has ceased to ply him with her remonstrances, and to tell him that it is so—of one, who, in the pursuits of voluptuousness, suffers not one thought of the law of heaven, to stop him in that unhallowed career on which he has embarked himself—of, one, who, in the prosecution of gain, can do things without one check of remorse, which other men could not do, without their inner man bringing the whole armour of principle and of compunction and a struggling sense of duty into war against it. You must, in your walk of experience, have met with such men—whose conscience is asleep, or whose conscience has lost its power of admonition; or whose conscience, at least, has given up her wonted task, of presenting her admonitions to the notice of the infatuated profligate, or of the corrupt and devoted worlding. And if you just connect this fact, offered to you by your own experience, with the undoubted truth—that this said conscience is neither more nor less than the organ, through which the Spirit of God sends His impressive whispers into the soul; and plies it with the awful lessons, of man being answerable to his God, and of God's wrath being revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of man—Then the right inference to make concerning him who hears no such whispers, is, that the Spirit of God is no longer at work with him. He no longer offers to move him out of the fatal tranquillity which has got hold of him. And that soul, which is enjoying itself for a few years—which feels so much at ease, because leaning on a foundation of repose that never varies—which goes on to sin without one disquieting scruple; and to keep by its distance from God, without one terrifying thought of His unescapable eye, and His no less unescapable judgment—Why such a soul, surrounded as it may be with all the securities of unconcern, and of worldly pleasure, and of prosperous circumstances, and of health, which bids fair for a long vista and a brilliant perspective on this side of eternity—such a soul, with all its enviable tranquillities, and all its keen enjoyment of time and of its vanities, is neither more nor less than ripening for its doom, in the deceitful calm of a deep and undisturbed infatuation. And, however much the easy man may be the object of complacency to himself and of convivial delight to his acquaintances who are like him—on him lies the awful sentence of being let alone; of being given up by the Spirit of God; of being turned from as one of those hopeless subjects, on whom all the past suggestions of conscience and of principle have been thrown away: of being left to the deep spirit of slumber, in which he may persist to the hour of death, and from which he may never, never be awakened, till the sound of the last trumpet shall summon him from the grave—and the awful infliction of his now heedless, and thoughtless, and remorseless guilt, shall frown upon him in fell characters of truth and of severity from the judgment-seat.

But, it may be said, does not this treatment of him by the Spirit of God look hard and unrelenting? Would it not be kind to keep by him, and to remonstrate with him, and to send another and another suggestion through the conscience of this poor child of infatuation? Yes, but ere we indulge in these reflections, let us think what the Spirit of God has already done for him. We appeal to his own remembrance, if any such be here, whether the Spirit of God have not already done all this? We call him to look back on his youthful days, and bid him recol-

lect, if there never was a time in the whole history of his life, when conscience awoke upon him, when, ere he entered that career of guilt on which he is now so fully embarked, if the internal monitor, true to her office, did not struggle the point with him; and he, suffering himself to be overborne by temptations, would none of her reproof, and turned away from all her admonitions? We ask him to tell us upon his own honest remembrance of the past, if, even after he had been led astray among the dark paths of this world's deceit and this world's profligacy, conscience still did not keep for months and for years by her post, and ever and anon plied him with her visitations? We ask him, if she did not fill her mouth with arguments, and make use of every plea to recal her thankless disciple, from the profanations and the depravities into which he was wandering? Was there never a time when she pressed him with her suggestions; and he, shutting the hasty door against them all, took shelter in the surrounding example, and quelled his every agitation amid the boisterous merriment of his still hardier acquaintances?

Yes, if he will only look back, he will find that it was long and very long, ere conscience gave way to his repeated insults, and was at length compelled to quit him under the power of his manifold and provoking contempt for her. And ere she could resign her task, did she borrow suggestions from every quarter, and try her every expedient, and waited her every moment, and bethink herself of a variety of affecting considerations. She would at one time fetch an argument from heaven; and tell him of the God who sitteth on the throne, and of the law that proceedeth out of His mouth, and of the all-seeing eye that is in every place beholding the evil and the good. At another, she would fetch her argument from earth, and, to subdue him into tenderness would she set before him the picture of a venerable father; and of the mansions of piety, where he spent his early days, and would have shrunk in horror from the thought of his present delinquencies; and of the prayers which his unsuspecting parents are still putting forth for him; and of the thankless return he has made them for all their anxieties; and how, dismantled of all his youthful innocence, and with all purity fled from his practice and all tenderness from his heart, he was widening every day his distance from that God, at whose word he had been taught to tremble, and whose sabbaths he had been taught to remember and to keep them holy. But why need we talk of his conscience, when in fact it was the pure and the Holy Spirit of God, who prompted her every admonition, and gave its emphasis to every lifting of her voice. This Spirit kept by him; and gave him the fairest and most frequent trials; and, grieved though He was by the bitterest provocations did not for long abandon him; and went along with him to those haunts of iniquity, where pure as He was, He had to bear with all the impurities and all the execrations which are acted in these scenes of wickedness, and even then did He attempt to reclaim him to seriousness: But all, all was stifled; and after a patience exercised to the uttermost—after the discouragement of many refusals—after being quenched and resisted in many thousand ways—then and not till then did the Holy Spirit of God, against whom he is now venting forth his murmurs of discontent, abandon him to his own infatuation.

And even still, if there be any individual of the description we allude to within the reach of our hearing, and whose conscience has been at all touched, or his feelings at all arrested, by the instrumentality of our feeble voice—then there has been another agent between him and us, than the mere sound by which the words of truth are conveyed to his hearing. The Spirit of God has lent His presence to the sound. And after the long and dreary absence of those years which have been spent at a distance from all that was serious in principle, and all that was pure and righteous in conduct, has He now come back upon him; and made another reappearance; and given him another sight of His rebuking countenance; and is making another trial to find a way into his bosom: and forgetful of every provocation, and of every wrong that He has gotten from his hands, is He telling him that here is another opportunity; and lifting His friendly countenance, that, if possible, He

may still restrain him from the fate of a desperado in rebellious iniquity against God. He is pointing to him, on the one hand, the terrors of that sentence which is awaiting him, if he will turn him away from the reproof that He is now laying upon His conscience; and, on the other, He is trying to lure him to his safety, by holding forth to the eye of his mind the arms of an inviting lawgiver, who, even in this late hour of his dark and deceitful day, still says, That if he will only return to Him and make his peace with Him through the blood of an everlasting covenant, and be willing to live no longer to himself but to the new law of Him who has taken upon Him the burden of his iniquities—that He is willing to forgive all and to forget all. If any thing will touch the heart of him who has driven at a long career of hard and obstinate impenitency, this should. And if it do not, who does not see that God has wiped His hands of him? Who does not see, that He who sitteth on the throne, and has plied him through life with so many warnings of proclaimed danger and so many messages of insulted tenderness, has acquitted Himself of all harsh and unrighteous severity? Who does not see, that the blood lieth on the head of him who has thus abandoned himself; and that it is by his own repeated sins against the imploring and beseeching and expostulating Spirit, that this Spirit tempted and exercised to the uttermost, has taken its final flight, and put on its inflexible purpose of never returning to this vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.

Now the appeal we have made to the hoary and the habitual and the hackneyed offender is applicable to you all. If there have come near the hearts of any one of you this day, a single impulse towards the repentance that is unto salvation, it is the Spirit of God who brought the impulse home to your conviction; and you inflict upon Him a wound and a provocation, if you let it be smothered among the levities or the profanenesses or the cold and blasting secularities of this alienated world. You have made this one other attempt in the work of striving with you fruitless; and you are tempting Him to desist from striving altogether. O what a fearful importance it gives to every suggestion of right or of wrong by which you are visited! Encourage the suggestion and follow it; and you encourage the Spirit of God to persevere with you, in the exercise of all His offices. Stifle the suggestion, and resist it, and suffer it to be quenched and forgotten amid the tumults of a noisy, headlong, and worldly career; and you set up a contest from which God declares, that His Spirit will at length retire. His patience has a limit beyond which it will not pass. And by this one and that other act of resistance, to the call of Turn and repent and live—by this wretched postponement one day after another in which you have persisted so long—by this deceitful carrying forward of the purpose, to some distant period of your anticipated history—by this delusive miscalculation upon the eleventh hour—you are every day bringing nearer to you that awful consummation, when it might be said of you, what our Saviour said with tears over the devoted city of Jerusalem, "Hadst thou known in thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are forever hid from thine eyes."

May the Spirit of God press home this interesting argument resistlessly upon you; and by the working of that power of His, by which He is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, may all your feelings and all your purposes be overborne. May the call of immediate repentance force its way through the withstanding barriers of every heart, that is now trenched in the depths of alienation. In the striving of this day, may He make a conquest over you. And working in you faith with power—and making through this faith your souls a fit habitation for Himself—and stirring up within you the immediate resolution of giving up all that you know to be sinful in your conduct—and plying you with suggestions, which, listened to and obeyed, may open an inviting access into your heart for all His communications—May He thus obtain within you a firm and inviolable lodgment—That brought under the dominion of His purifying and sanctifying and perfecting influences, it may be seen of you, that you are indeed born again by the word of God, brought home to your consciences with power by

the Spirit of God; and have embarked all your energies and all your desires upon that new track of obedience, which carries forward to the glories of immortality, every new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VI.

On the Nature of the Sin unto Death.

"There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."—1 JOHN v. 16.

If we assume that the sin unto death is the same with the sin against the Holy Ghost—then, from what has been said in a previous discourse, it will follow that we regard those people to be on a wrong track of inquiry, who, with a view to ascertain whether they have committed this sin, look back to their by-gone history; and rummage the depositories of their past remembrance; and try to find, among all the deeds they have ever committed, that one deed of particular enormity, to which the forgiveness of the gospel will not and cannot be extended. There is, in truth, no such deed within the reach of human performance. The blood of Christ can wash away the guilt of all the sins of all the individuals in the assemblage before us; and, in the hearing of every one of you, do we make this free and open announcement of the gospel remedy, in all the power and preciousness which belong to it. It is a matter of rare occurrence, but it does occur, that the imagination of this sin fills the heart of some melancholy patients with the agitations of despair; and spreads a dark and mournful complexion over the secret history of him who is the victim of it; and keeps the comfort of the gospel far away from him; and fixes in his mind the obstinate delusion, that there is a something about him, which renders him an exception to those wide and universal calls, which are made to circulate at large among all the other sons and daughters of the species. Now this is a misapprehension. The offer is still unto all, and upon all who believe; and he is not excluded from the offer. And there is not a single iniquity of his past life that so excludes him. And if he will only come to Christ in His appointed way; and do honour to the power of His sacrifice, by resting on it; and show respect to His authority, by putting forth all the energy that is in him to act up to its requirements; and evidence his humble submission to the doctrine of the Spirit, by praying for Him in faith; and give proof of the general honesty which runs through all his principles on the subject of the Christian religion, by his diligent use of every revealed expedient, in the way of reading and acting and devoutly observing the appointed ordinances—then do we say to him what we say to you all—that you have taken such a step, and entered upon such a career, and committed yourself to such an infallible guidance, as in spite of all the manifold deformities of your past life, and under all that guilt of rebelliousness which now lies upon you, will translate you into acceptance with the God whom you have so deeply offended; and carry you forward by the ascending march of a progressive and ever-advancing sanctification, to all the glories and all the perfections of a blissful eternity.

But though this retrospective examination of the past is not the way of ascertaining whether you have committed the unpardonable sin, there is a way, not perhaps of ascertaining, but of gathering much both of probability and of most valuable and important information respecting it. The question we put to you is, not what you have done through the life that is past, but what do you feel at present? How is the call we have now sounded in your ears, telling upon your purposes? How is this wondrously free invitation of the gospel entertained by you at this moment? Tell us, if the proclamation of an open path to return

to the God from whom you were alienated, is at all disposing you to bestir yourselves and moving you towards Him? Let us know, if it be your intention now, to abandon every one of the things which you know to be the will of Christ that you should abandon; or, in other words, to turn ye from all your iniquities. Let us know, if you wish to submit your hearts to the power and the vitality of His spiritual law. Let us know if you wish for acceptance on the simple footing of His righteousness; and if you wish for holiness through the operation of that Spirit, which is alone able to revolutionize your inner man, and bring it into an entire and an altogether devoted conformity to the will of a heart-searching God. Tell us whether the earnest aspiration and the honest intention towards all this be in you; or tell if the urgency of these invitations be now falling without power and without fruit upon your unstimulated consciences. Then know, that, if, in the struggle of your opposing purposes and your conflicting inclinations, the world shall prevail—we will not say, if you have yet so grieved the Holy Spirit of God, as to determine Him to leave you for ever: But you have at least heightened the provocation, and brought it nearer to the point of His final abandonment. We cannot say of any of you, that you have come this length already. But we can say of all who retire from us this day, without an effective purpose of immediate repentance—that, by this single act of resistance, you have brought yourselves nearer to it. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not a point of mysterious speculation. It is a point of practical importance. It is a point of plain and impressive application to every ordinary conscience. And what a fearful importance does it confer on every call to turn unto God—what a mighty reinforcement to every argument that can be addressed to you for turning immediately—that by every resistance to every single impulse that is made upon you, you are working up the sin against the Holy Ghost nearer and nearer to that point of aggravation, at which He takes His final departure away from you; that you are making farther approaches to a state of desperate impenitency; that you are getting forward to such a pitch of hardened opposition, as constitutes the sin unto death—a sin for which no intercession will avail; no prayer of weeping relative will be lifted with efficacy to heaven; no earthly expedient will ever woo that Spirit back again, whom your manifold provocations and your oft repeated contempt have determined to let you for ever alone.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is not some obscure and useless doctrine, which occupies its hidden corner in the field of revelation; and forms a legitimate topic of speculation only to those, who have attained some rare and monstrous distinction by a daring feat of impiety. It carries a lesson along with it which applies to you all at this very moment. If there be some old among you, upon the obduracy of whose hackneyed consciences, the call we have now lifted in your hearing makes no practical impression—then, look not for the sin against the Holy Ghost in any guilty act by which some passage of your former history is deformed. It consists in that repeated act, by which you have turned the every call of the gospel away from you; and the evidence of it does not lie in any thing that memory can furnish you with out of the materials of the history that is past. The evidence of it lies in the present condition of your soul, as to its moral and religious sensibility; and if that sensibility is so far deranged, as to beget in you at this moment no impulse towards your turning unto God, in that way of appointed mediatorship that is made known to us in the New Testament—this is a fell and an alarming symptom as to you, and well have you reason to suspect and to anticipate and to tremble. Again, if there be some old among you, who, after a sleep so long and so profound that it bore a resemblance to the irrecoverable sleep of death, are now visited with a movement and a desire and a concern after these things; and feel a readiness in you to be all that Christ would have you to be; and are looking earnestly towards the way of His salvation; and long to be established upon it—then we have no power of divination into the way or the mind of the unsearchable Spirit. All that we can do is to put a fair interpretation upon the facts that are before us. And the fact of an

arrested conscience even on the eleventh hour of an indolent and a rebellious day, speaks for itself, and tells you that He has not yet left you. And we feel not that we are exceeding our warrant by a single inch, when we try to cheer you on by the language of encouragement; and call upon you not to quench the Spirit—not to let this movement in your heart pass unproductive away from you—not to make of it but one transitory glimpse, previous to an everlasting departure.—But do follow out the impulse that you have gotten; and drink in all the comfort that the free grace of the gospel is fitted to inspire; and aspire after all the strictness of walk and conversation, which becomes the profession of it; and let not the imploring cry for the clean heart and the right spirit cease to ascend to the throne of God through the channel of His Son, till the answer come down upon you in all its fulness, and your repentance be perfected.

But let the youngest also among you, (and by addressing ourselves both to old and young we comprehend all who now hear us), learn what a fearful thing it is to tamper with conscience—to stifle any of its movements—to suppress the dictates of your inward monitor on any temptation whatever—or to suffer the small still voice within you to be deafened and overborne, by the maddening outcry of those lawless, those deriding, those profligate scorners with whom you may have unhappily associated. By so doing you commit an offence against the light of conscience. You commit an offence against that present agent, who makes the light to shine upon it. And one such offence facilitates the way to another.—And you enter on a career of defiance to principle. And the matter aggravates. And the sin accumulates upon you till it arrives at that fatal point in the history of every man who walks the whole of the broad way which leadeth to destruction—even to that point where the Holy Ghost abandons him for ever; and that just because the sin against the Holy Ghost, is now wrought up to that degree of enormity, which provokes Him to take His final and irrecoverable leave of you.—Every slighted call brings you nearer to this point. Every neglected warning brings you nearer to it. Every sermon however much it may be talked of, and liked, and acquiesced in by the understanding, if it tell not on the practical powers, brings you nearer to it. The history of this very day may bring you nearer it. And therefore it is, that we never can consent to repentance on any other terms than repentance now. We never can listen without alarm to all the misapplied phraseology about the eleventh hour. We never can speak to you in any other language, than "to-day while it is called to-day." We never can lay before you the gift of an offered Saviour, but we must speak of "now as your accepted time, and now as the day of your salvation." And we have but one object, and all our explanation has been thrown away on him who retires from us this evening; and who, if hitherto a stranger to the power and significancy of these things, does not, from this time forward, begin and carry on that good work of turning unto the Lord, which shall terminate in the secure and everlasting enjoyment of His presence in paradise.

Now, to turn all this to the practical account of regulating our intercessions in behalf of others—suppose, in the first instance, that I possessed in a perfect degree, a gift that we know to have been miraculously conferred in the first age of Christianity—the discerning of spirits.—Suppose me endowed with the faculty of looking to another man; and taking as accurate a note of the movements of his heart, as if I could perceive through a window the secrecy of all its operations. Give me the power, in particular, of estimating all the degrees of his actual resistance to the voice of conscience; and furnish me at the same time with the knowledge at what point of resistance it is, that the Holy Spirit gives up the man with whom he has been striving to the infatuation of his own perverse and determined wilfulness—and then would I know at what instant of time it was that he had committed the sin unto death.—Then I would know how long he remained the hopeful subject of my intercessions; and then would I know the time of his arrival at that point in the history of impenitence, when the inspired Apostle of our text withdraws his positive sanction from my prayers. It is to be observed, that he does not speak upon

this subject with the tone and in the terms of decision. He does not peremptorily forbid prayer. He speaks in the manner of a man who had received no positive commission upon the subject. He leaves it on the footing of a point of doubtfulness, whether a man should pray or not for an acquaintance in these circumstances. He announces himself to his readers, very much in the same way in which Paul announced himself, when he ventured to speak in his own person, and not with the authority of an inspired messenger. "I speak as a man." I give you my own judgment, says Paul, in a matter, in which God has not thought fit to favour me with any revelation. In the verse before us, John does not even venture to give us his own judgment. He goes no further than to express his opinion of the inefficacy, and therefore his doubtfulness as to the propriety of intercession, when it was made in behalf of one who had sinned the sin unto death. But he at least supposes that some of those whom he addressed, had the means of knowing when a professing Christian committed this sin. Suppose them then to have this knowledge.—Suppose, that, in virtue of the miraculous gift of discerning spirits, they were made sure of the irrecoverable state of some member of their society. Then they could not pray for his recovery in faith. They could not, along with such a prayer, present that offering to God which is essential to its acceptance. They could not, in this instance comply with the injunction of the Saviour, who tells His disciples, that whatever they ask in prayer, let them believe that they are to receive it, and they shall receive it. They could not believe that they were to obtain by the power of their supplications, the recovery of the soul of him, whom they knew that the Holy Spirit had irrecoverably abandoned. They could not therefore do, what, in the verses immediately preceding the text, they were told would give an unfailing success to all their petitions—they could not ask for this thing, knowing at the same time that it was agreeable to the will of God; and therefore knowing that they should have the petitions that they desired of Him. And in these circumstances does John, by expressing his doubtfulness whether such a prayer was right, withdraw at least the sanction of a positive authority, from any intercessions delivered for an object so hopeless and so unattainable.

This, then, is the practical result that would come out of the circumstances of the first Christians. Those of whom they did not know, that they had committed the sin unto death, they would make the subjects of their intercession before God; and as to those of whom they did know that they had been guilty of this sin, they would feel, from the want of faith in the possibility of the object, and from the discouragement they received at the mouth of an apostle, that they could not pray for them with any efficacy. Now just conceive them to have no certain way of knowing at all whether any had committed this sin or not—what effect should this have on the practice of intercession? Why, it would bring the whole human race within the circle of their prayers. It would enable them to fulfil the injunction of "pray for all men," without laying any such modification on this precept as is pointed out by the apostle in the text. Those whom they thought hopefully and well of, they could of course pray for with a higher degree of confidence before God, than those of whom they were ignorant or doubtful. But still there was no positive knowledge of their case being irrecoverable, that ought at all to restrain them from such petitions, as, "Lord, if it be thy will, do thou work faith with power in the heart of this particular acquaintance"—"Lord, if it be possible, that the obstinate enmity to the truth which festers in the heart of another, can be made to yield to the influences of thy Divine Spirit, do thou cause it to pass away from him"—"Lord, do thou recal my unhappy relative from those depths of alienation in which he is sunk, and raise him from his death in trespasses and sins to the new obedience of a spiritual resurrection." Yes, and though his depravities should accumulate upon him by every hour of his earthly existence; though the hardness of an impenitent heart should be ever gathering into a temper of still more settled obstinacy than before; though habit should be compassing him round within the enclosure of a tighter and more inextricable bondage; nay, though in the

secret counsels of heaven his die should be cast, and months or seasons may have rolled, since the Spirit made His last attempt upon him, and then died away into a final and irremediable separation—yet so long as this counsel is a secret to you —so long as in your mind this question has a slight uncertainty to rest upon it—then you are not released from the duty that lies upon you; and acting, as it is your humble and becoming part to do, on the revealed things which belong to you and to your children—you are at your post when you pray for the man of whose fate you are in the dark, though his fate may have long been fixed and determined on.

Now this exhibits to us the kind of intercourse which goes on very extensively between earth and heaven—the intercourse, if we may use the expression, of praying at a venture. It is a kind of intercourse warranted by scriptural example. Did not our Saviour pray, that, if possible, the cup might pass from Him?—and He had to drink it to the very dregs. Did not Peter tell Simon Magus to pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him? And, in the Old Testament, have we not examples of this uncertainty, as to the result both of praying and of doing? Does not God call on the people to prove Him—to put Him to the trial by their prayers? And does not the expression repeatedly occur, "Let us return unto the Lord"—at one time in the way of supplication, at another in the way of obedience?—And it is stated as the effect of it, that it may be the Lord will be gracious.

What then should be the practice of the present day? We have no doubt that there are many who have put the final seal upon their own condemnation. But the question is, are there any upon whom that seal is legible to us? Is there a single individual of our acquaintance, upon whose forehead we can read the inscription, that he is undone? Is there a mark set upon him, by which we can learn, that he has rendered himself a fugitive and a vagabond from the mercy of God? Is there any such index, that at all offers itself to the eye of our senses; and if there be none, then, is there any one of us, who can so weigh the secrets of the heart, and so penetrate into the counsels of God, as to determine of one single human being who walks abroad on the scene of life and population around us, that he is an outcast from prayer? In those days of miracle, when the discerning of spirits was given to apostles and to primitive teachers, there may have been individuals, in behalf of whom the duty of prayer ought to be suspended—who had not only thrown themselves irrecoverably out from the mercies of God, but who, certainly known to be so, had arrested that voice of supplication, which wont to ascend for them from their fellow-men. In those days of wide and visible distinction between the church and the world, when the very profession of Christianity proved a certain degree of sincerity and earnestness—when, by the very act of being admitted into the society of disciples, it was made evident, that there was a certain liking for their doctrine; and a certain sympathy in their feelings, and in their faith; and a certain participation in the hopes of the gospel; and a certain tasting of the word of life; and a certain habit of living by the powers of a coming world—In those days, when men by their very profession proved that they were so far partakers of the Holy Ghost—that to throw him off, after all their experience of the power and preciousness of His teaching—that to throw Him off, after all the fellowship they had with Him, and all the favours of light, and direction and joy they had gotten from His hand—argued a degree of resistance more hardened and more irrecoverable, than even to hold out against His first and His earliest instigations—In such days, and with such a visible landmark before them, as the withdrawment of an apostate from their communion, we know not but that even ordinary and unendowed Christians may have been able to judge of some of them, that they had so fallen away, and so crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and so put Him to an open shame—that they had committed the sin unto death, and were beyond the reach of human prayer, because it was impossible to renew again unto repentance.* But tell us, if you have attained this certainty of

* See Heb. vi. 4—6.

any one man you can point your finger to? Can you say of any one desperado in wickedness, that there goes an outcast from mercy, and that it is vain to pray for him? Or, rather, is it not true of us all, that such is our ignorance of the human heart; and so deep is that veil with which the God of wisdom has chosen to shroud the doctrine of individual destiny—that there is not a man within the range of the acquaintance of any of us, of whom it is not our becoming duty to pray in his behalf, lest peradventure God may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth?

Now mark how the very principle which runs through the subject of praying for others at a venture, applies in the whole extent of it to the subject of preaching to others at a venture. He who is put in charge of the gospel, knows not to whom it shall be the savour of life unto life, and to whom it shall be the savour of death unto death. He is at his post, and in the exercise of his duty, when he proclaims it in the hearing of all, as that free and unconditional offer of mercy which is at the taking of all.

He knows not where the offer is to light; nor from whose individual bosom it is to chase away his heavy alienation from the God whom he has offended; nor what is the heart that shall be softened by it out of all the obstinacy of its former impenitence; nor in what quarter of the crowd that is before him, that man is to be found, whose conscience shall surrender itself to the power and urgency of the preacher's voice; nor into whose conviction the winged messenger shall find its entrance, because the power and demonstration of the Spirit have lent to it all its efficacy. Why, he is like a man drawing a bow at a venture; and he knows not whither the arrow is to speed its uncertain way. But of one thing he is certain—that if the argument, by which he is trying now to storm the fortress of human corruption, shall fall fruitless on the soul of any individual amongst you, that soul is strengthening the bulwarks of its future resistance against him; and the weapons of his spiritual warfare are becoming every day more languid and more ineffectual for their purpose; and the Holy Ghost, grieved by this fresh act of contempt and disobedience, is nearer than ever to the step of a final abandonment. And thus it is that a doctrine, which, if it only ministered exercise to the understanding, we never should have touched upon—a doctrine, which, if it only serve to regale the curiosity of the speculative, is to him of no more use than any one of the lofty abstractions of philosophy—a doctrine which may be talked about, and controverted, and commented on in a thousand different ways, while no salutary alarm is felt, and no energetic purpose is formed, upon the undoubted truth, that every day of procastination is nearing you to that point of time at which the Spirit shall cease to strive with you—Thus it is that the doctrine of the sin against the Holy Ghost may be turned to the attainment of a practical end. It should so tell, in fact, on the hearts and the consciences of all men as to help on the business of their immediate repentance; and it leaves every one without the shelter of a single pretext, for delaying to turn to God in His appointed way, and, fleeing from all sin, to flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel.

These explanations may serve perhaps to do away a difficulty, which, to the eye of a superficial observer, hangs over a remarkable passage in the history of our Saviour. On His approach to the city of Jerusalem, it is said of Him, that when He came near and beheld the city, He wept over it—saying, "If thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." It looks a mystery, that our Saviour should weep for that, which He had power to ward off from the object of his tenderness—that He who created these worlds, and who is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, should abandon Himself to the helplessness of despair, when He contemplated the approaching fate of that city, which, after all the wrongs He had sustained from it, and all the perverseness and provocations He had gotten from its hands, He still longed after and sighed over in all the bitterness of grief at the prospect of its coming visitation. Why, it may be thought, could not He have fulfilled the every desire of His sympathizing heart, by interposing the might and sovereignty which belonged

to Him? Could not He have arrested the progress of the victorious armies? Could not He have been for a wall of defence around His beloved city; and whence that dark and mysterious necessity, to which even the power of Him, to whom all power was committed both in heaven and earth, was constrained to give way—insomuch that the Being, in whom was vested an omnipotence over the whole domain of Nature and of Providence, felt that He had nothing for it but to sit Him down and weep over the doom that He saw to be irrevocable? It is true that the inhabitants of this devoted city were the children of darkness. It is true that they still put the calls and the offers of the New Testament away from them. It is true that their yet unpenetrated hearts were shielded round by an obstinacy which had withstood every previous application. But could not He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in their hearts with such a power and a splendour of conviction, as would have been utterly irresistible? Could not He who is able to subdue all things unto Himself, have subdued His countrymen out of that obstinacy, which had hitherto stood immoveable to all the influence that was brought to bear upon it? Could not that influence have been augmented? Could it not have been wrought up to such a degree of efficacy, as would have overmatched the whole force and tenacity of their opposing prejudices—and had this been done, the people would have been converted; and the threatened vengeance been withdrawn; and the Saviour would have seen in His countrymen of the travail of His soul, and been satisfied; and the mysterious phenomenon of the greatest and the powerfulest of all beings weeping over a calamity, to avert which He had both the power and the inclination, would not have been presented: and how then does all this accord with what we know, or what we can guess, of the character of God's administration?

Now this brings us to the limit between those secret things which belong to God, and those things which are revealed and which belong to us and to our children. It were well for us that we gave up all our guesses, and made no attempt to be wise above that which is written. And it were well for us that we remained satisfied with what God is pleased that we should know, or with being wise up to that which is written. If the question related merely to the power of God, we are apt to think that there is no limit whatever to what He simply can do. We are apt to think, for example, that God could, if He had chosen, have lifted, by a simple act of remission, all the penal consequences of sin away from us; and have treated us as creatures, who stood absolved from the guilt of all our transgressions; and have introduced us in this state into heaven; and made each of us live in a state of enjoyment there throughout all eternity.

But God has other attributes than those of mere power. And in virtue of them, He has chosen to conduct the administration of His government on certain great and unchangeable principles. And He has told us, and nothing remains for us but to take the information just as it is given, He has told us, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and no forgiveness without faith in that propitiation which is through the death of Jesus. And thus had the Son of God to bear the burden of all the vengeance that we should have borne; and to take upon His shoulders the whole weight of the world's atonement; and to pour out His soul for us in tears and agonies and cries. And had there been no other attributes in the character of the Godhead, but the simple energy of His omnipotence and the longings of His compassion, all these pains and sorrows of suffering innocence might have been spared; and, without so heavy a sacrifice the barrier which defended the gate of Paradise might have been opened to a guilty world. But the truth and justice of God demanded an expiation; and we show the docility which belongs to us, when we give our unreserved acquiescence to the recorded fact; and like little children in humility, as we are in understanding, it is our part to take the statement as the statement is offered to us. In the same manner, when His Jewish enemies were proceeding to put our Saviour to the trial; and were mustering up their witnesses against Him; and were concerting all those measures which led to His execution—He could have inter

posed, and defeated all their policy, and overthrown all the might of that fearful combination that was leagued to destroy Him: And had there been nothing but power in the case, and a simple desire to ward off from the Son of God all the disgrace and humiliation and misery He was about to endure—how readily would twelve legions of angels have palsied the every arm, and sent consternation into the every heart of His persecutors! But here lay the necessity, and a necessity too, which, according to our Saviour's own account of the matter, constituted an invincible barrier in the way of His deliverance—This cannot be, says He, "for how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The truth of God behoved to be accomplished. The prophecies of God must obtain their vindication. And dire as the spectacle was, to see perfect innocence so cruelly borne down, it was all forced to give way before a great and unchangeable principle in the Divine administration. Now apply this to the matter before us. Take into account only the power of the Saviour to deliver the city of Jerusalem, and the strength of His kind and affectionate desires towards it; and you might think that there lay before Him a plain and practicable way for the fulfilment of the object. But there was another principle of the Divine administration which overruled the whole of this matter; and, without attempting to dive into the reasons of the counsel of God, or to inquire why He has adopted such a principle—enough for us the bare announcement of the fact that it is so. He has found out, and He has published a way of salvation; and a message of peace is made to circulate round the world; and all who will are made welcome to partake of it; and the Spirit, urging every one to whom the word of salvation is sent to turn unto Christ from their iniquities, plies them with as much argument, and holds out to them as much light, and affects the conscience of one and all of us with as much power—as ought to constrain us to the measure of accepting the Saviour, and relinquishing for Him the idol of every besetting sin and of every seducing vanity. But if we will not be constrained, it is the mode of His procedure with every human soul, gradually to cease from His work of contesting with them. And He will not always strive. And to him who hath the property of yielding to His first influences, more will be given. And to him who hath not, there will even be taken away from him such influences as he may have already had. And thus it is that the way of the Spirit with the conscience of man, harmonizes with all that we feel and all that we experience of the workings of this conscience. If often stifled and repressed, it will at length cease to meddle with us. And enough for every practical purpose that we know this to be the fact. Enough that it is made known to us as a principle of God's administration, though we know not the reason why it should be so. Enough to alarm us into an immediate compliance with the voice of our inward monitor, that, should we resist it any longer, the time may come, when even Omnipotence itself will not interpose to save us. Enough to compel our instantaneous respect for all its suggestions, that, should we keep unmoved and unawed by them, even the God of love, who wills the happiness of all His children, may find that the wisdom and the purity and the justice of His government require of Him our final and everlasting abandonment. And O how we should tremble to presume on the goodness of God—when we see the impressive attitude of Him, who, though the kindest and gentlest and best of beings, looked to the great mass of His countrymen, and foresaw the wretchedness that was in reserve for them; and, instead of offering to put forth the might of His resistless energy for their deliverance, did nothing but give way to the tenderness of His nature, and weep for a distress which He would not remedy.

They had got beyond that irrecoverable point we have so much insisted on. They had tried the Spirit of God to the uttermost, and He had ceased to strive with them. At that time of their day, when, had they minded the things which belong to their peace, they would have done it with effect—they put away from them His every admonition, and His every argument; and now there lay upon them the stern and unrelenting doom, that they were for ever hid from their eyes. Let us once more make the

application. The goodness of God lies in the freeness of that offer wherewith He urges you now. And He backs this offer by the call of repentance now. And He tells you, that, to carry forward and to perfect this repentance, He is willing to minister help to all your infirmities now. And on this your day, He calls you to mind these things and to proceed upon these things now. But should this goodness not lead you to repentance—then it is not a goodness that you have any warrant to calculate upon, at any future stage of your history. And the time may come when all these things shall be hid from your eyes. The goodness of God is perfect, as all His other attributes are; but then it is a goodness exercised in that one way of perfect wisdom which He has thought fit to reveal to us. It is a goodness which harmonizes, in all its displays, with such maxims and such principles in the way of God's administration, as God has thought fit to make known to us. It is a goodness that will not survive all the resistance and all the provocation that we may choose to inflict upon it. It is a goodness, in virtue of which, every one of us now may turn to the God whom we have offended; and be assured of His abundant forgiveness; and be admitted into all the privileges of his reconciled children; and, rejoicing in the blood that cleanseth from all sin, stand with all the securities of conscious acceptance before Him; and be established in that way of new obedience, for which He is both able and willing most abundantly to strengthen us. All this now, all this to day while it is called to day, should you harden not your hearts. All this on that critical and interesting now, which is called the accepted time and the day of salvation. But O forget not, that the same Saviour, who sounded just such calls in the ears of his countrymen, and would have gathered them together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, ere a few years more had rolled over the city of Jerusalem, wept when he beheld it, and thought of the stern and unalterable necessity of its approaching desolation.

SERMON VII.

The Christianity of the Sabbath.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

THERE are some who are disposed to assign to the Sabbath the same rank with the positive and ceremonial observances of Judaism; and who think that the authority of its obligations has ceased, with the rigours and the burdens of that grosser economy which has now gone by; and who make the spirituality of our own more enlightened dispensation the argument on which they would found the relaxation, if not the utter neglect, of this ordinance; and, in all this, they feel themselves to be very much confirmed by the silence of the New Testament, which never recognises the institution but for the purpose of reducing the austerities which had of old been thrown around it. And, therefore, would they assimilate the keeping of this day to the performing of any of those rites that have no place in Christianity; and bear to it no more regard than they would to any of those Hebrew festivals, which, since the destruction of the temple, and the coming in of another system of worship, has fallen into total and irrecoverable desuetude.

For the permanency of the Sabbath, however, we might argue its place in the decalogue, where it stands enshrined

among the moralities of a rectitude that is immutable and everlasting; and we might argue the traditional homage and observancy in which it has been held since the days of the Apostles; and we might argue the undoubted and experimental fact, that where this day is best kept, there all the other graces of Christianity are in most healthful exercise and preservation. But we rather waive, for the present, all these considerations; and would rest the perpetuity of the Sabbath law on this affirmation, that, while a day of unmeaning drudgery to the formalist, it is, to every real Christian, a day of holy and heavenly delight,—that he loves the law, and so has it graven on the tablet of his heart, with a power of sovereignty upon his actions, which it never had when it was only engraven on a tablet of stone, or on the tablet of an outward revelation,—that, wherever there is a true principle of religion, the consecration of the Sabbath is felt, not as a bondage, but is felt to be the very beatitude of the soul, —and that, therefore, the keeping of it, instead of being to be viewed as a slavish exaction on the time and services of the outer man, is the direct and genuine fruit of a spiritual impulse on the best affections of the inner man.

Christianity does not dispense with service on the part of its disciples. It only animates this service with another principle, substituting what itself calls the newness of the spirit for the oldness of the letter. Now, the question is, Can such a substitution be made to pass upon the services of the Sabbath?—for, if not, the genius of Christianity would appear to demand, that we should be rid of the Sabbath altogether, which ought not to retained, unless it can be brought into accordancy with the style and character of the new religion. But if, on the other hand, the Sabbath is really capable of being translated from the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit—there may be no need, under the economy of the Gospel, for the Sabbath being discarded—it were quite enough, that it should be accommodated to our more enlightened dispensation. There is a Judaical style of Sabbath observancy, and this ought to give place to the genius of our better economy. But there may, also, be a Christian style of Sabbath observancy; in which case, we have not to abolish this institution, but only to transfuse into its services the same spirit which the Gospel transfuces into all other services. Let the Sabbath be altogether done away, as out of keeping with Christianity, if only signalised from all other days by the bodily exercise which profiteth little; and if it admit not of being so signalized by that godliness which is profitable unto all things. It were a most unseemly appendage to the discipleship of the gospel, could it not be delivered from the aspect of a morose and unbending Pharisee; and be softened and transformed into the aspect of a free, and joyful, and affectionate worshipper of the God of love. We are willing to rest, upon this condition, the claims of Sabbath to the homage and observation of Christians; and, should it not be possible to make the condition good, we are willing that the Sabbath should pass away with the feasts and the holidays of a ritual that is now superannuated.

Certain it is, that the Sabbath day may be made to wear an aspect of great gloom and great ungainliness, with each hour having its own irksome punctuality attached to it; and when the weary formalist, labouring to acquit himself in full tale and measure of all his manifold observations, is either sorely fatigued in the work of filling up the unvaried routine, or is sorely oppressed in conscience, should there be the slightest encroachment either on its regularity, or on its entireness. We may follow him through his Sabbath history, and mark how, in the spirit of bondage, this drivelling slave plies at an unceasing task, to which, all the while, there is a secret dissatisfaction in his own bosom, and with which he lays an intolerable penance on his whole family. He is clothed in the habiliments of seriousness, and holds out the aspect of it; but never was aspect more unpromising or more unlovely. And, in this very character of severity, it is possible for him to move through all the stages of Sabbath observancy—first, to eke out his morning hour of solitary devotion; and then to assemble his household to the psalms, and the readings, and the prayers, which are all set forth in due and regular celebration; and then, with stern parental authority, to muster in full

attendance for church, all the children and domestics who belong to him; and then, in his compressed and crowded pew, to hold out, in complete array, the demureness of spirit that sits upon his own countenance, and the demureness of constraint that sits on the general face of his family; and then to follow up the public services of the day by an evening, the reigning expression of which shall be, that of strict, unbending austerity—when the exercises of patience, and the exercises of memory, and a confinement that must not be broken from, even for the tempting air and beauty of a garden, and the manifold other interdicts that are laid on the vivacity of childhood, may truly turn every Sabbath as it comes round into a periodical season of sufferance and dejection: And thus, instead of being a preparation of love and joy for a heaven of its own likeness, may all these proprieties be discharged, for no other purpose, than that of pacifying the jealousies of a God of vengeance, and working out a burdensome acquittal from the exactions of this hard and unrelenting task-master.

Now, it must be quite evident, that such a Sabbath is characterized throughout by the oldness of the letter. The fear, and the disquietude, and even that sense of the meritoriousness of works, which all issue from the spirit of legality, may easily be witnessed in its various services. And nothing can be more palpable than the want of heart and of good will in its whole style of observation. It is an affair, not of love, but of labour—not the homage of spontaneous affection, but a mere thing of handiwork, and of bodily exercise. The very soreness and scrupulosity of the man's conscience, on the accidental misgiving of any of his arrangements, are at utter antipodes with the liberty of one of the children of God. There is no one character of a free celestial spirit that exists beneath this grim form and parade of godliness. It is like the attempt to make a purchase of heaven by the pains and the privations of a rigorous devoteeship; and little are many of our sturdy professors aware, how much the operose drudgery of their Sabbath is at variance with their own orthodoxy,—how often it is prosecuted with the view to establish a righteousness of their own,—and how there may mingle with these laborious sanctities, both of public worship and of private and family exercise, the very spirit in which either Papist or Pharisee thinks that he will carry heaven on the strength of his manifold observations.

But after all the sabbath was made for man; and the worthlessness of such a sabbath as the one we have now attempted to pourtray, is no argument against an institution which must be capable of a most important subserviency to the great cause of moral and religious improvement. Though often kept according to the oldness of the letter—that is no reason why it may not also be kept according to the newness of the spirit; and if so, then is it fully entitled to a place of high authority among all the other services of an enlightened Christianity. And accordingly the very services which are rendered by one man in the spirit of a couching servility as drivelling and pharisaical, may, when rendered by another, be the genuine emanation of a heart that is altogether free and fearless and affectionate towards God. To the eye of the world, there may be a strong visible resemblance both in the kind and in the succession of these exercises—while to the eye of God, and in respect of essential character, they differ as widely as light does from darkness. It makes the utmost possible dissimilarity between one human soul and another, whether the sabbath be like a fast that affects the soul, or like a feast that yields to it its best loved entertainment. In the one case, it is certainly possible to be most sternly resolved on the drudgery of all its services—even as it is possible for a man of the world, on the mere strength of an obstinate determination, to stand out for hours together the hallowed air of a conventicle of piety however hateful it may be to him. But it argues a man of a distinct moral species altogether, and to be endowed as it were with such organs of moral respiration as the other does not possess, who can breathe in that air with delight, and feels it to be the very element by which he loves most to be surrounded. So that the wretched sabbath history, which we have already offered to your notice, is quite another thing, from a history which bears to it a very

strong external resemblance; but is impregnated by wholly another spirit, and is sustained throughout all the stages of it by another principle—The history not of a sabbath drudge, but of a sabbath amateur, who rises with alacrity to the delight of the hallowed services that are before him—who spends too his own hour of morning communion with his God, and from the prayer-opened gate of heaven catches upon his soul a portion of heaven's gladness—who gathers too his family around the household altar, and there diffuses the love and the sacred joy which have already descended upon his own bosom—who walks along with them to the house of prayer; and, in proportion as he fills them with his own spirit, so does he make the yoke of confinement easy and its burden light unto them—who plies them with their evening exercise, but does it with a father's tenderness, and studies how their task shall become their enjoyment—who could, but for example's sake, walk fearlessly abroad and recognise in the beauties of nature the hand that has graced and adorned it; but that still a truer charm awaits him in the solitude of his own chamber, where he can hold converse with the piety of other days, with some worthy of a former generation who being dead still speaketh, with God himself in the book of His testimony, or with God in prayer whom he blesses for such happy moments of peace and of preciousness. And so he concludes a day, not in which his spirit has been thwarted, but in which his spirit has been regaled—a day of sunshine to the recurrence of which he looks onward with cheerfulness—a day of respite from this world's cares—a day of rejoicing participation in the praises and spiritual beatitudes of the future world.

Now if you have no taste for such a sabbath as this, you have no taste for heaven. If these services be a weariness to your heart, then the services of the blest in eternity were also a weariness to your heart. You are still of the earth and earthly; and when this world is burnt up, and the whole universe is thrown into two great departments—of a sabbath and sainted territory on the one hand, where the redeemed and the unfallen alike rejoice in the prayers and praises of the Eternal; and a doleful region of blasphemy on the other, where be those accursed outcasts who bear no love to God and have no delight in the exercises of godliness—Then recollect, that, beside the one and the other of these dominions, there is not one spot of ground like this temporary and intermediate earth that you will have to stand upon.—And, distasteful as you are of sacredness here, and with no other alternative there than sacredness for ever or suffering for ever, what other doom is left for us to pronounce upon you, who so love the occupations of this week-day world, and so droop and languish under the weary routine of sabbath prayers and sabbath services, than that when the world is dissolved and no place is found within the limits of creation but one abode for the celestial and another for the damned—then will this your dislike to the fourth commandment be indeed the fellest indication of your unmeetness for a seat of glory, of your being a vessel of wrath and fitted for destruction.

You will perceive then a very striking peculiarity in this sabbath law—that, perhaps of all others, it is best fitted to exemplify the distinction between the oldness of the letter and the newness of the spirit; and is at the same time so abundantly capable of being kept in the latter style of observation, as most abundantly entitles it to its old place in the decalogue even under the pure and enlightened economy of the gospel. In one way of it, it may be nothing better than an elaborate ceremonial, a lifeless body of religiousness without the breath of its warm and animating spirit, and whereby the starch and unbending formalist of our day can still exhibit the very gait and character of grossest Judaism. In the other way of it, it may have all the refinement and rationality of a service that is altogether celestial; and be the efflorescence of a heart that is touched with fire and feeling from the upper sanctuary; and be the truest symptom that can possibly be given of a spiritual taste and a spiritual affection; and with all its outward resemblance to the sabbath of a formalist, stand as much apart from it in essential character as the devotion of a seraph from the drivelling of a slave; and, so far from savouring of that earthly

Jerusalem where Pharisees of old heaped their laborious offerings on the altar of legality, may the Sabbath of a Christian be the very nearest specimen that occurs in our world of that Jerusalem above where all is freedom and confidence and good will. And distaste, we repeat it, for the services of such a sabbath as this, is just distaste for the services of eternity. The very commandment, which, when kept in the spirit of a fearful scrupulosity, argues you to be still in beggary and bondage, is the commandment that, when kept in the willingness of a spontaneous heart, argues you to have the exalted taste and liberty of one of God's children: And it is indeed a striking singularity of this observance, that though when punctually rendered against the grain, it is but the drudgery of a worthless superstition—yet when pleasantly rendered and because with the grain, it becomes kindred in quality with all that is most pure and ethereal in sacredness; and the best evidence that can be given of the regenerating touch, whereby earth-born man is assimilated to an angel, and becomes a new creature in Christ our Lord.

We have now only to say in conclusion of this part of our argument, that something more ought to be gained by it, than the mere specific object of evincing the Sabbath to be in full harmony with the spirit and character of the Gospel. We should like, if, in the course of these observations, any thing may have been said that is fitted to arrest the conscience of hearers. We think that the Sabbath may be turned into a very palpable and powerful instrument for the discovery of your real spiritual condition. You will know surely whether its peculiar services are felt by you to be a pleasure or an annoyance—whether there be dulness or delight in its psalmody—whether the longing of the soul be towards its retirements, or towards a relief from them—whether the morning be most rejoiced in, because it ushers in a day of sacredness, or the evening because it terminates the irksome round, and brings you again to the margin of that element in which you most love to expatiate. You will be able to tell whether you are most at home in your closets or in your countinghouses? You have spent many Sabbaths in the world; and you may at least say from the recollection of them, whether your taste is for communion with God, and how far the spirit that is in you congenializes with the feelings and the exercises of piety. We are not aware of a better test, or of one that can be turned to readier use and application; and we therefore urge it upon you, to come to a conclusion upon the question—whether your heart be more set upon the things of the world among which you move and are busily conversant through the six days of the week; or on those things that are above, and to which the duties and opportunities of the seventh day give you the power of a nearer and more affecting approximation—whether you like it best, to be immersed in the business and the pleasure and companionship of a scene that is speedily to pass away; or to stand as it were at the gate and on the confines of that inheritance which is in heaven, and there catch a glimpse of its coming glories, and be refreshed by a sample and a foretaste of its coming blessedness? Tell us which is the drift of your prevailing inclinations? Whether be they towards the secularities of commercial or festive or fashionable life, or be they towards the serenities of faith and prayer and spiritual contemplation? We ask you not to lie overwhelmed in utter hopelessness, if heretofore it is too plain that you have been a child of the present world—without the taste for sacredness, and with scarcely an aspiration after it. But we do ask you to mark by the intelligible appeal that we have now made to you, how wide the transition is from the atmosphere of nature's every-day pursuits and every-day propensities, to the atmosphere of all that grace and goodness in which if you cannot breathe with comfort here, you will never breathe in heaven hereafter. We bid you reflect what a vast and untrodden distance you have still to walk, ere you reach a meetness for the joys and a taste for the sanctities of the upper paradise. We crave your attention to the vast immeasurable space by which humanity has receded from the ground which it once occupied, and become as an alien and an outcast in a far country from the great family of holiness; and we would put you the question, whether to the truth

of Scripture there is not an echo in your own experience—when you read how total the revolution of character must be —how a something tantamount to a new birth and a new creation must take effect upon the soul, ere you shall become an heir of the everlasting kingdom, or have entered on that course of grace which leads to a consummation of full and finished glory?

But how shall this transition be effected? How shall the soul be made to gather upon it a taste and a temper so opposite to that of its first nature? How shall it be made to relish as its best loved enjoyment, that which it has hitherto felt to be irksome and unsavoury? Wonderful change in the habit of the affections you will allow, if he who at one time nauseated the air of the public or private sanctuary, shall now breathe therein with delight, as in the element that is best suited to him—and the Sabbath from a service of weariness shall become a service of willingness. This would imply a change equivalent to that by which the old man is transformed into the new creature—and it will be seen that our present topic though in regard to the matter of it it be but one solitary and specific observation, yet when viewed in its proper bearing it rises into a question of general and paramount importance—for the question how shall I learn to love the Sabbath is commensurate to the question how shall I be so renewed in the spirit of my mind, as that I who have been heretofore carnal, and whose affections were only kindred with the objects of sense, and of intellect, shall now become spiritual, and have a kindred pleasure in the objects and the contemplations of sacredness?

It may serve to throw some light on the real difficulties of this transition, when we reflect on what that is which we can do, and what that is which we cannot do in reference to Sabbath observation. We can task ourselves with the manifold varieties of bodily exercise. We can forcibly withdraw our presence from the fields, and constrain our presence either to church or to our closets. We can by dint of mere strenuousness endure a Sabbath confinement however irksome, and breathe a sabattic atmosphere however dull; but to turn the irksome into the agreeable, and what is dull in the Sabbath of the Lord to feel it a delight and honourable—in attempting this, with only the resources and the energies of Nature at command, man feels himself at the limit of his helplessness. He can no more change the taste of his heart from the creature to the Creator, than he can change his organic taste for the kinds of food that are set before him. He may force himself to that which is nauseous to his animal palate, but he cannot divest it of its nauseousness; nor can he bid his spiritual palate to relish the hallowedness of Sabbath, however much he may compel himself to the drudgery of its manifold observations. The anatomy of his moral frame would need to be reconstructed, ere such a revolution of taste could be made to take effect upon it; and this he can no more do, than he can newmodel the anatomy of his morbid frame: And thus it is, that while quite a possible thing to keep the Sabbath in the style of a most sour and unbending formalist—it is no more possible for man to keep it in the style of a free and joyful and affectionate worshipper, than it is for a man at his own bidding to make all things new, or for man to be the author of his own regeneration.

It all resolves itself into the distinction between the spirit of love and the spirit of legality. Could you exchange the one spirit for the other, then would you turn Sabbath from a day of constraint into a day of cheerfulness. You never will get the better of your distaste for the religiousness of Sabbath—while you look upon God in the light of a jealous taskmaster, and yourselves in the light of bondmen who have an allotted task to perform, and by rendering all the items of which you eke out the fulfilment of a stimulated contract. It is this accursed spirit of legality which turns Sabbath service and every other service, into a heartless thing of distaste disquietude and most unproductive anxiety; and never will this day be kept aright, till, out of the new-born desires of an evangelized heart, it be kept, not as a fast to afflict the soul, but as a feast to regale it—not as a service of desert for which you obtain the friendship of God, but as a service of grateful commemoration in return for the friendship that has been already prof-

fered, and already been accepted of. You will not know what it is to have a religious, and, at the same time a free Sabbath, till you have embraced the offers of a free Gospel; and then all will be light, and liberty, and enlargement; and the cold obstructions of legality will give way from the labouring bosom; and the opportunity of meeting with God as your undoubted friend will be prized and courted—when the opportunity of meeting with him as your rigid and unrelenting exactor would be looked to with feelings of timidity and distrust and heavy alienation. It is the Gospel which refines and elevates the whole style of our obedience. It is the Gospel which turns it from the extorted drudgery of a crouching fearful superstitious slave, into the ready services of attachment. And as it is saying much, on the one hand, for the doctrines of grace and atonement and righteousness by faith, that it is the acceptance of these which forms the stepping-stone from service in the oldness of the letter to service in the newness of spirit—so it is saying much on the other hand for Sabbath, and for its title to rank among the institutions of Christianity; that, instead of a mere positive and ceremonial observance, which ought to be expunged from our more enlightened economy, there is not one other precept of the decalogue that admits of being more evangelized, or of having a brighter and more beautiful radiance of celestial grace and celestial glory thrown over it. The services of Sabbath upon earth, form the very nearest approximation that can be made to the current and every-day services in Heaven. He who does not love them loves not God. He who droops in weariness under the exercises of Sabbath, has nought before him but a dismal prospect of eternity. There is none admitted to Heaven, to whom Heaven were a dull and melancholy imprisonment; and there will be no midway territory like our present earth, between the Heaven of the redeemed and the hell of the rebellious. It forms indeed an emphatic argument to flee from the coming wrath, and to flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel—that it is not only on this ground where forgiveness and a free acceptance are awarded; but on this ground, and on it alone, can we learn to love that law which we aforetime hated, and to rejoice in those observations that we aforetime resisted and trampled upon. And if you indeed long for such a revolution in your taste and in your desires, as that Sabbath shall cease to be an oppression, and become to you a day of hallowed and honourable enjoyment—never cease to fix your regards on Christ crucified, till, through Him, all your legal apprehensions have given way, and you can rejoice in God as indeed your faithful friend, as indeed your reconciled Father.

And this seems to be the right place for adverting to a very common aphorism that is constantly on the lips of worldly men—at one time in the form of reproach against the seriousness of decided Christians, and at another of vindication for their own levity; and that is, that religion was never meant for gloom but for enjoyment—that Christianity is always in her best style, when in the style of cheerfulness—that, in her strict, and precise, and puritanical aspect she is the scourge and the terror of our species—and that it is only by the relaxation of this aspect, that she is put into accordancy with the real spirit and character of Him who has drest nature in smiles: and who, God of love as He is, can have no sweeter incense to ascend to Him from our world than the happiness of a grateful and rejoicing family. And thus it is, that they would seek for countenance to their own vain and giddy gratifications—in pleasures and amusements, not where God is recognised, but in the midst of which God is utterly forgotten; to that merriment of the heart which is inspired, not by any cheering and at the same time accurate thoughts of their heavenly Father, but to that merriment which has its foundation in the thoughtlessness of merest unconcern and vacancy. The maxim is a true one, but they utterly misconceive its application. Religion is indeed the minister, not of gloom, but of enjoyment; but of enjoyment only to them whose hearts have been so touched as to be attuned to the spirit and the feelings of sacredness. The genuine style of Christianity is that of cheerfulness; but the way in which it breathes cheerfulness into the soul, is, not by altering its own character for the purpose of accommodating itself to the

astes of the unconverted, but by altering the tastes of the unconverted, through the renewing process which they are made to undergo, to its own uncompromising and invariable character. The maxim is just; but not the slightest authority does it give to the glee, and the gaiety, and the joyous companionship, of Sabbath profanation. To rejoice in God is a habit of the soul, not merely different, but diametrically opposite to the habit of him who rejoices *without* God; and all the zest and vivacity of whose pleasures, any visitation of seriousness would instantly put to flight. The maxim most assuredly is just, and bears with emphatic condemnation on the weary and ever-doing formalist—who toils at his Sabbath duties, with a hand most punctual to their fulfilment, and a spirit fretted and galled as if by the felt burden of so many painful and ponderous austerities. The maxim that Christianity is a free and indulgent religion condemns this Sabbath drudge, but it does not acquit the Sabbath despiser; and then only does it find its satisfying application, when the first light of Sabbath morn summons the affectionate disciple to those kindred exercises of piety in which his heart is most fitted to rejoice who goes not sadly but spontaneously to that which, animated as he is with the breath of another spirit, he feels not as a painful task, but as a precious opportunity—and like the Christians of old can eat his meat with gladness and singleness of heart, not because like those who take shelter in the maxim that religion is averse to melancholy, his delight is in sense or in unsanctified appetite; but because his delight is in converse with God.

Were heaven a mere paradise of music—then, to attain the capacity of enjoying it, one would need to be a lover of harmony. It is conceivable that a musical festival, held at short periodic intervals, were the fittest preparation for obtaining and fostering the musical taste, and so for being happy in such an immortality as this. Those who had delight in the beauty of airs and the sweet concord of voices, would welcome the recurrence of every coming festival as they would a joyful entertainment; and, whether in the ecstatic pleasure felt during the currency of the performance or in the grateful emotions that were left behind it, would they bear an obvious countenance of satisfaction; and as, they sent forth the beamings of a regaled and recreated spirit, might they impress the conviction upon many, that those men who are the most strenuously bent on their education for Heaven are at the same time the happiest upon earth.—Others again, without any taste for music whatever, may give any unwearied attendance to the festival; and determinedly support the whole irksomeness of its uncongenial confinement; and, utterly against the drift of their own native tendencies, sit out the oppressive hours of a heat and a noise that are well nigh insupportable; and all this too on the imagination, that heaven was to be conferred upon them, as the payment of wages for all the painfulness and self-denial of this unvaried regularity. But alas! when they get to the heaven of our present supposition, music will be the only reward that shall meet them there. That music which so sickened and fatigued them in time, will be all the entertainment they have to look for through eternity: And who does not see by such an illustration as this, that the Sabbath formalist will miss the happiness of both worlds—unhappy here because drivelling all his days at a work that is utterly uncongenial to his spirit; and unhappy there, because, even should he enter within heaven's gate and it be shut upon him, he finds himself in the midst of that very work, which, though a delicious treat to others, was always to him a reluctant task, and the feeling of which still will turn the paradise in which he dwells into a dull and everlasting imprisonment.—Now, though it be the happy and not the reluctant disciple of music who can rejoice in the musical heaven, that is not to say that he who is only happy in other things will ever reach it—that he who prefers the liberty and fresh air of the general world to the lessons of the recurring festival, will, because happy in his own style here, be in fit preparation for the happiness of another style hereafter. And neither does it follow, ye gay and unreflecting men of the world, because like unto the best and highest of Christians in being cheerful, you will ever sit

down with them as the partakers of a cheerful eternity. Your happiness is of sense, and theirs is of spirit; and the paradise for which they are training by the exercises of the weekly Sabbath festival, instead of a mere paradise of music, is a paradise of sacredness. And think not ye men, in all whose joys and pursuits there is the secularity of a world that soon fadeth away—think not of assimilating the reckless hilarity of your bosoms, to the heaven-born joy that glows in the bosom of a spiritual Christian.—Or despisers as ye are of that Sabbath which to him is the source of hallowed and heavenly delight, that ever you, with your present habit, will realise any other condition than that of being left without pleasure and without a portion through eternity.

SERMON VIII.

The Advantages of a fixed Sabbath.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years."—GAL. iv. 10.

THERE are two distinct grounds, on which works in religion are appraised at a low or rather worthless valuation in the Bible, and either rejected or denounced accordingly. The first is when they are offered as the price of our justification in the sight of God; as an equivalent upon which the Lawgiver is challenged for the honour and the regard that are due to righteousness; as an acquittal on our side of that bargain where the obedience of the creature forms one part, and the good will of the Creator forms the other part of the stipulation that is betwixt them. A work may be entitled in certain respects to the designation of good; but when this good work assumes the character of purchase-money for eternal life, and in so doing assumes that the thing which is rendered by man is in the reckoning of the divine law, satisfactory value for the thing that is given to him by God in return for it—then does the Bible utterly hold at nought, the most laborious, and, perhaps, when looked to in another view, the most holy and estimable of all human performances. This is a point upon which the gospel, earnest to enlighten man as to the worth of his acceptance with God, and as to the worthlessness in regard to merit of his own proper pretensions to it, will descend to no compromise whatever with the vanity or the deceitful imaginations of our fallen species. Acceptance with God is most liberally held forth on the footing of a present to the sinner; but it is most firmly and tenaciously kept back on the footing of a purchase by the sinner. Still, however, it was bought for us; or rather after it had been forfeited, it was redeemed for us, and at a ransom too, altogether commensurate to its value. There was a price given for it; but that price is neither in whole nor in part the contribution of the sinner himself. He is welcome, if he will, to God's favour. Nay, he is welcome to this favour by being put into possession, if he will, of a positive right to it; but then he must understand that it is not a right conceded to him, because of any claim of merit whatever in his own performances. He must learn more justly to estimate the value of this right to the favour of a God of holiness; and that it cannot be rated according to the righteousness of man, but according to the righteousness of Christ's atonement and holy services. To cheapen the right of man to Heaven's reward down to the standard of man's obedience, were to degrade to the same standard the righteousness of God. And thus to sustain the dignity of God's character, does the gospel disown, and repudiate man's works, when accompanied with the plea for divine favour, as their just and adequate remuneration.

But there is still another ground on which works are computed at a low valuation in the Bible—and that is, when,

either in themselves they are devoid of true moral excellence, or serve not in their tendencies to refine and to strengthen the principles of our moral nature. If the work in question carry in it no indication either of love to God, or of love to man,—if there be in it no character of spiritual worth, or spiritual rectitude,—if, on tracing it to its first impulse from a principle within the heart, it betoken no becoming grace, or no duteous and incumbent morality, which should have its residence there,—if it neither flow from some good affection of the heart, nor be of any reflex efficacy in making the heart better,—in a word, if disjoined from the virtue of the inner man, it be a mere muscular or mechanical action, which affords an exercise, and gives weariness to the body,—if it be merely some operose task, or some irksome confinement, laid upon the person, which, after it had been resolutely gone through, or resolutely endured, terminates in itself, and leaves no increase, either of godliness or of humanity, behind it,—if, instead of appertaining to any thing of mind that is devout, or upright, or generous, it be a work that can be done by a mere putting forth of the animal powers, and which, after its performance leaves its laborious agent as little ennobled, in his spirit, above the animal as before—Then, on this ground, also, does the Bible hold it to be of as utter insignificance as the Saviour held the fasts, and the ablutions, and the whole fatiguing and fruitless ceremonial of the drivelling Pharisee. The former works were offensive, because, like many of the works of Popery, they assume a merit in the sight of a highly exalted God. The latter works are offensive, because, like many of the works of Popery—as its penances, and its offerings, and its telling of rosaries—they have a meanness in the sight of every truly enlightened man. And as, to sustain the dignity of God, the Gospel holds out a countenance of rebuke towards those works of presumption on which we would found the claim of our legal righteousness for reward from the Lawgiver—so, for the sake of stamping a true dignity upon man, does the Gospel also hold out a countenance of rebuke towards those works of superstition which serve not to exalt or to purify the soul; and which varied or multiplied in every possible way, can never shed upon him who performs them either the grace or the lustre of a true personal righteousness.

But let a good work be delivered of both these ingredients—let there be neither an arrogated merit nor an inherent meanness in it—let the sinner who performs it inflict no offence on the unspotted righteousness of God, by offering it in price for that which nought can purchase for the guily but an unsullied obedience and a perfect expiation; and, at the same time, let it be such a good work as serves, not to degrade, but to dignify, the performer, and as both marks and matures the real worth and growing excellence of his character—let it be free of all pretension to the reward which has been forfeited by man, and which a Divine Mediator alone can redeem to him; and, at the same time, let it, in its own substance, be free of all pettiness and abject timidity—And we say of works like unto this, that, so far from the Gospel lifting a voice of hostility or casting a look of discountenance towards them, the very aim of the Gospel is to raise and to multiply them over the face of a new moral creation. The ultimate design which the Gospel has upon man, is not to redeem his person, but to renovate his character—not to lift off from him the weight of condemnation, that, under the deliverance, he may merely sit at ease; but that, thereby, he may be free to enter on a course of activity, along which he is ever approximating to the worth and holiness of the Godhead. For this, in fact, as the great and terminating object, was the whole peculiar economy of the Gospel raised. For this did Christ die, that the men of nature and of the world might become men of God, and be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He, by His propitiation, hath made us partakers of the Divine approbation, but just that we might become partakers of the Divine nature The justification, which He hath bought for us, is only the door of admittance upon the career of glory and virtue to which He hath called us. In the works which we do, let the merit of Christ be fully recognized, and the example of

Christ free as it is from debasing superstition, and bright as it is in all the graces of essential rectitude, be fully regarded; and the declared purpose of the Gospel is, upon the basis of such a humility, to build up every believer according to the similitude of this godlike pattern. It is not to damp his enthusiasm in the cause of good works, but to make him zealous of them. And, after rooting out the weeds, both of legal presumption and of worthless formality, from the soil of our nature—is it the office of the Gospel to turn it into a well-watered garden, over which the eye of Heaven might rejoice in the reflection of its own likeness; and even the best and holiest of all be regaled by its sweet-smelling odours, and look down with complacency on its fair and pleasant fruits of righteousness.

Nothing can be more obvious in the epistle to the Galatians, than the express disinclination and dread of the Apostle towards certain works; but then these were works tainted with the alloy of both the obnoxious ingredients—as when a justifying merit was assigned to the rite of circumcision—and then, what did its performance avail to the great object either of purifying or of elevating the moral character? But with all his reprobation of such works, and after it might have been imagined by some that he had extinguished works altogether, mark how, ere he finishes his argument, they are made to re-appear upon the Christian, and to replenish both his heart and his history with the richest variety of excellence. It is, indeed, interesting to notice how the transition is secured in the Gospel from the humble to the holy, —how, if the creature will only renounce the worth of his own services, and seek unto God with the righteousness of Christ as the only price and the only plea he can offer for acceptance, how, from this abyss of felt and acknowledged nothingness, God will cause him to arise,—how, if he will only stand denuded of all that virtue which he deemed noble enough for the rewards of eternity, a virtue shall be inspired into his bosom, and made to effloresce upon his life, that really will ennoble him. And thus it is, that while in those compends of Christianity which Paul left behind him, both the decencies of nature and the drudgeries of superstition are, in respect of their sufficiency with God, supplanted and set aside by the faith of the Gospel; yet he never fails to represent that faith as emanating an obedience of a higher order, that is free from both the vitiating admixtures—alike dignified in its character, and unpretending in its claims.

In the text too, there is a certain scrupulous observation referred to by the apostle, which his converts adhered to as a duty, but which he charges them with as if it were a delinquency. They observed days and months and times and years, annexing a religious importance to the stated acts and exercises of stated periods; and we have no doubt, labouring under distress of conscience, at any misgiving from the prescribed and wonted regularity. It is likely enough, that both of those ingredients which go to vilify a work, and to render it null and worthless, entered into this outward formality of the Galatians—that it gave them a feeling of security as to their meritorious acceptance with God, which nought but the Redeemer's merits ought to inspire; and that it further degraded the character of man, by reducing morality to the level of mechanism, and substituting for the obedience of a rightly strung and rightly actuated heart, an obedience like that of a galley slave who plies at his unvaried oar and moves in the one and unvaried circuit that is assigned to him. Man was not made for this. He was not even made for the Sabbath; and neither surely was he made to go through the seasons of his existence, like the figures upon an orrery. He was not made to square the movements of his person with the lines or the convolutions of a diagram—nor was it ever intended of this creature, endowed as he is with the noble capacities of thought and sentiment and spontaneous affection, that time should lay her arrest on the free-born energies of his nature, or subjugate him to the dull routine of her cycles and her epicycles. This may do for a piece of unconscious materialism, or it may do for a beast of burden; and the cruel task master man has made it to do for the yoked and harnessed negro, who, day after day, toils on that beaten path-way of labour, to which a stern and unchanging necessity has compelled him. But

shall the spirit of him who knows the truth, and whom the truth has made free, be laid under the bondage and the beggary of such grovelling services? There was something more than jealousy for the prerogatives of Christ's righteousness, which inspired the apostle's antipathy to the whole work and labour of the Galatians. We think that there was also a generous and high-toned ambition, that while to Christ should be awarded all the glory to which he was entitled, on man should be imprinted all the grace and dignity of which he was capable—that he should be rescued from the degradation of those poor and meagre and creeping servilities, which were stealing their entrance into the churches; and that for such paltry and pitiful rudiments, there should be substituted the light of a higher morality, the love and the liberty of the children of God.

But then will not this expunge the Sabbath from the observation of Christians—that day which comes as invariably round to us as a lunation in the heavens—that day the keeping of which compels us to move in the dull uniformity of a circle; and which, instead of leaving him to the free aspirations of a a heart that knows no control but that of high and heaven-born principle, would still reduce the man to an automaton? And does not Paul in the parallel epistle of Colossians, turn his argument to this very application? "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbath days." Does not he here set them utterly at large from all the prescriptions of the ritualist; and fearlessly commit them to the guidance of such principles, as are drawn from a loftier morality, and are addressed to the nobler feelings and the higher faculties of our species? Does not he call upon us to abandon altogether the walk of ceremonial observation for the walk of spiritual exercises; and is not the Sabbath levelled, and laid under the same interdict, with all the other drudgeries of the Pharisee or the formalist? Were it not accordant then with the character, nay, even with the demands of the gospel that this institution should be henceforth swept away; and will not enough be left in its room, if the regenerated spirit when broken loose from its imprisonment, shall, in the genius of our better economy, expatiate without obstruction on the more ethereal field of its own fellowship with the upper sanctuary, and of its own secret but seraphic contemplations?

Now though it be true that man was not made for the Sabbath, yet let it never be forgotten that the Sabbath was made for man. Man was not made to move in a precise orbit of times and seasons; yet times and seasons may be arranged, so as to subserve his use, and be the ministers of good both to his natural and moral economy. Were the keeping the Sabbath a mere servitude of the body which left the heart no better than before, it would be a frivolous ceremonial and ought to be exploded. But if it be true that he who sanctifies the Sabbath sanctifies his own soul, then does the Sabbath assume a spiritual importance, because an expedient of spiritual cultivation. The suspension on this day of the labour or business of the world—its scrupulous retirement from the converse or the festivities of common intercourse—its solemn congregations and its evening solitudes—These singly and in themselves, may not be esteemed as moralities; and yet be entitled to a high pre-eminence among them, from the impulse they give to that living fountain of piety, out of which the various moralities of life ever come forth in purest and most plenteous emanation. It is not that the virtue of man consists in these things, but that these things are devices of best and surest efficacy for upholding the virtue of man. Were it not for this subserviency, the Sabbath might well be swept away; but because of this subserviency, it not only takes its place among the other obligations of Christianity, but is entitled to that reverence which is due if not to the parent at least to the foster-mother of them all. If the Sabbath of any one of the primitive churches obtained not this homage from the apostle it must have been because a Sabbath of ceremonial drudgery and not of spiritual exercise. And you have only to compute the worth and the celestial character of all those graces, which have sheltered and fed and reared to maturity in

the bosom of this institution, that you may own the high bearing and dignity which belong to it.

If it be true of man, that he can attain a loftier communion with his God, at those hours when the din and urgency of the world are away from him; and that a season of reading, and contemplation, and prayer acts as a restorative to the embers of his decaying sacredness; and that the voice of a minister, when prompted by the Spirit from on high, and aided by the sympathies of all who are around him, can often send the elevation of heaven into his soul; and that it is on those evenings of deep and lengthened tranquillity which the footstep of intruding companionship does not violate, when the nurture and admonition of the Lord can descend more abundantly on the hearts of his children, and when the calm and the unction of a holy influence may be most felt in his dwelling-place—then Sabbath, which, from one end to the other of it, teems with these very opportunities, instead of ranking with the holidays of idle superstition, will be dear as piety itself to every enlightened Christian; and to it, in the most emphatic sense of the term, will he award the obeisance of a divine and spiritual festival.

And on this principle too, may the Sabbath be rescued from that contempt which the text, in denouncing the observation of days and of times, would appear to cast on it. It is true, that it is a periodic festival, and that man was not made for periods. But this does not hinder that periods may be made for man. We have already affirmed, that Sabbath work is good for man to be engaged in, because it is a work of sacredness; and the remaining question is simply this, Whether will man do more of that work, if left every day of his life to the waywardness of his own desultory inclinations, or if a certain recurring day shall be cleared of this world's concerns and companies, and he be reminded, that the business of religion is its peculiar destination? It is a sound though homely maxim, that what may be done at any time is never done; and on this principle alone, it is good that a day shall be fixed upon—casting up at equidistant intervals, and on which the people of the land shall feel themselves more strictly and pointedly summoned to the work of intercourse with God and of preparation for eternity. It is good for man that he is not left in this matter to his own caprice and his own listlessness—that whether he wills it or not, Sabbath should recur upon him at its own periods, and proclaim an authoritative halt on the business of the world—that this day, ushered in if you like with the sound of bells, should announce itself to his very senses as a day of sacredness—that it should give out another echo than that which falls upon the ear from the general buzz and action of week-day employment—or even that in the morning silence of our streets, and that hallowed peacefulness which overspreads the landscape, it should have its own mementoes to characterise it. We put it to the plainest understanding, whether, with such an arrangement, more of business will not be transacted with Heaven, than if man were left to steal to the hour he chose from the bustling urgencies of his business in the world. And on this ground singly, though there were none beside, would we say of our Sabbath, that, unlike to the days and times which were observed by the crouching devotees of Galatia, it is worthy of the homage of the most enlightened ages, for its wise and merciful adaptation to the laws of our moral nature.

And the maxim that what may be done at any time is never done, applies with peculiar emphasis to every work against which there is a strong constitutional bias—where there is a reluctance to begin it, and the pitching of a strenuous effort to overcome that reluctance, and the pleasant deception all the while that it will just do as well after a little more postponement—a deception which, as it overspreads the whole of life, will lead us to put off indefinitely; and this in the vast majority of instances is tantamount to the habit of putting off irrecoverably and for ever. Now this would just be the work of religion when shorn of its Sabbath—a work to embark upon which Nature has to arrest her strongest currents; and to shake her out of her lethargies; and to suspend those pursuits to which by all the desires of her existence she is led most tenaciously to cleave; and to struggle for the ascendancy of faith over sight, and of a love to the un-

seen God whom the mind with all the aids of solitude and prayer so dimly apprehendeth, over the love of those things that are in the world, and whose power and whose presence are so constantly and so importunately bearing upon us.—And will any say that in these circumstances, the cause of religion is not bettered by Sabbath, that weekly visitor coming to our door, and sounding the retreat of every seventh day from the heat and the hurry and the onset of such manifold temptations? It is not with dissipation's votaries that we are pleading this cause. But let us know, ye votaries of business, are ye able to preserve in your spirits through the week such a flavour of God and godliness, as to make you independent of any recruits that a Sabbath might afford you? Does sacredness so keep at all times its undisturbed place and pre-eminence, amid the turmoil of those many secularities by which you are surrounded, that any one set and specific time is not needed, on which, at a distance from the besetting world, you might relume that lamp of heaven in the soul which was ready to expire? Or if the time were left to your own discretion, are such your longings after a spiritual atmosphere, that you would be ever sure to make your escape to it, when like to be lulled or overborne in an atmosphere of earthliness? It is true you may lift up your hearts to God when you please—and even amid the thickening occupations of the market and the counting-house, is it possible that many a secret aspiration may arise to Him. But how often is it that you would so please, and tell us on your experience of the past, what, if all days were alike, would be the fervour, or the frequency of such aspirations? How often does the sense of God intrude upon your hearts in company; and how much of it do you carry abroad in the walks of merchandise; or if there must be occasional retirement for the keeping up of religion in the soul, and the time and the opportunity were left altogether to yourselves, would there be actually as much through the week of the work and preparation of the sanctuary as a Sabbath could comprise?

We appeal to every practical understanding, whether it is not better, that a time has been appointed, than that the time should have been wholly abandoned to our random determinations; and that God's Sabbath should come to us, than that we should be trusted to find our spontaneous way to sabbaths and parts of sabbaths of our own? If in some hour of frenzied innovation our week were thrown into disorder, and our whole remembrance were obliterated of that day which has been consecrated by the observance of former generations—all the piety would depart from the land, along with all the Sabbath punctuality of our venerable forefathers. If this sanctuary, which has hitherto been fenced around from the outer court of week-day employments, were ever trodden under feet by the Gentiles, it would not be the sacredness within that should spread itself abroad over the whole mass of human existence; but the secularity from without would rush through the broken wall, and appropriate to itself the territory of holiness. The spirit of the world would engross and domineer over those last remnants of time which it had violated. The Sabbath of human life may be like the fleece of Gideon, when it was dry on all the earth beside, and the dew of heaven was upon it only. But we are not to expect, till the millennium perhaps has come upon our world, that it shall be dry only upon the fleece while the dew is upon all the ground; nor, should this day of solemn services be expunged from the history of man, are we to think that it shall offer any other aspect than one wide and unalleviated waste of earthliness.

We have already, though but briefly and incidentally, adverted to another benefit arising from a fixed and regular day for the services of piety. It brings a concert and a common understanding along with it. And this shields every family retreat from the inroads of boisterous acquaintanceship; and lays the alone effectual interdict on the calls and distractions of business; and not only throws a canopy of defence over the solitude of our private exercises, but affords to us a public and a social religion, and enlists the very sympathies of our nature on the side of sacredness, by impressing upon whole multitudes one consentaneous movement to the house of prayer. And there is a touching power even

in the visible insignia, wherewith, from this circumstance alone, the sabbath of Christians is decked and signalized—in the holiday costume, which is worn like a dress of ceremony to her honour—in that shut and barricadoed covering, which stretches along all the doors and windows of merchandise—in the suspension of human labour, and that general hush over the face of the world which marks the season of its deep and serious repose. This is all the fruit of a conventional understanding among men, which nought but the authority of a sabbath law could have rendered universal; and it is a fine poetical delusion, that even the lower animals of creation, together with its mute and inanimate things, partake in the stillness and solemnity of this hallowed day. It is indeed a most pleasing and allowable fancy—nor can we refuse our admiration to the lines which have so beautifully and with such tenderness expressed it:—

Calmness sits thron'd on yon unmoving cloud.
To him who wanders o'er the upland leas,
The black bird's note comes mellow'r from the dale;
And sweeter from the sky the gladsome lark
Warbles the heaven-tuned song; the lulling brook
Murmurs more gently down the deep-worn glen;
While from yon lowly roof, whose curling smoke
O'ermounts the mist, is heard at intervals
The voice of psalms, the simple song of praise.

But our main desire ought ever to be, not to regale with beauty, but to urge you with a sense of obligation. And, now, having endeavoured to rescue the sabbath law from the imputation of its being a paltry ceremonial; and to recommend it to the homage of enlightened minds; and to establish it in a rank co-ordinate with the highest principles of our moral nature; and to prove, in exception to the apostolic censure passed on the scrupulosity of the Galatians about days and months and times and years, that our sabbath, punctually though it does come round as clock-work, stands nobly and liberally aloof from all the ignoble characteristics of a drudging and mechanical observation—what now remains after the argument is finished, but to press it home upon your conscience, that you turn this day to all the high uses and facilities of which it is so abundantly capable? If it secure the retirement of your person from the world—let this be followed up by the escape of your spirit from the world's cares and the world's vanities, and by its busy exercise with those eternal realities which in the throng of ordinary life are so little thought of. If it open for you the place of solemn congregation—see that you forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, and let the intense devotedness of your hearts through the week to all that goeth on in the haunts of business, rebuke its many flights and wanderings on the sabbath from all that goeth on in the house of prayer. If it afford you the quiet leisure of evening with your household—let it be your care to redeem the sacred opportunity; and let not the neglected souls of your children, be so many frightful vouchers on the day of reckoning, of the many neglected sabbaths that you have spent upon earth. To whom much is given, of them much will be required; and on this principle your sabbaths, these precious gifts of God to man will have to be accounted for. And O, forget not, that if these have been nauseated in time, Heaven, if you e'er were admitted there, would be nauseated through all eternity. Sabbath is that station on the territory of human life, from which we can descry with most advantage and delight the beauties of the promised land; and it is there, as if at the gate of the upper sanctuary, where we can command one of the nearest approaches whereof our nature is capable, to the contemplations and the doings of the saints in blessedness. There is nothing else but sabbath in heaven, and in hell there is no sabbath. Such is the character of these two realms; and judge for yourselves the state of human character that is suited to them—which is the likely abode of him who delights in sabbath, and altogether changed with its spirit, therewith impregnates and sanctifies the week; and which is the likelier abode of him whose taste the business of the week monopolizes, and who altogether charged with its spirit, therewith pollutes and desecrates the sabbath.

And if it be true, that to set apart a day in the week for the business of Christianity, both provides a greater security and adds a greater amount to that business—it is no less true that the cause is essentially served, by setting apart to the same object certain portions of each

successive day. The great use of sabbath is to Christianize the whole life of man; but for this purpose something more is required than a weekly festival. There must be a daily repast; and we would extend the principle by which we have endeavoured to advocate the sabbath, into an advice, that each day should have its specific hours for the readings and the prayers, and the various exercises of sacredness. We know that this is a process which may be superstitiously gone through, and just as if man were made for the hours like a time-telling piece of mechanism—and then would he come under the denunciation of my text on the churches of Galatia, or under that high-minded contempt which is now felt for the mummeries and the paternosters of a more modern ritual. But we also know that this is a process which may be most spiritually and intelligently gone through, and at given hours too, because hours were made for man; and he acting with the authority of an enlightened judge over the habits and tendencies of his own moral nature, and experimentally aware that what may be done at any time is never done, counts it the best of arrangements for the best of objects to have solemn hours for solemn performances. It is not that we want to lay you under stop-watch regulation—a matter, most assuredly, against which Paul and every sensible Christian after him would protest, as quite incompatible with the religion of liberty. But we want, and on a survey of the known laws and principles of our nature, to devise fittest and most effectual expedients for keeping the free and elevated spirit of this religion alive. It is surely a good thing to make use of such expedients; and our anxiety is, not that you do this thing at a given time, but to strengthen and to multiply the guarantees for its being done at all. The style of observation, which, if terminating in itself, would be the grovelling of slavish and sordid devoteeship, might, viewed in its consequences, be generous and noble, and altogether accordant with that higher cast of morality, which speaks the air and the spirit of our better dispensation. And, it is on this account, and on this alone, that we lay the stress even of a religious importance on your morning and your evening sacrifices—that we bid you to the resolute observance of certain select portions of the day which you appropriate to sacredness, and which nought but overbearing necessity should ever tempt you to violate—that like those regular meals which recruit the body from the fatigues of business, you have also your regular occasions of fellowship with God, through prayer, or through the Bible, for that spiritual aliment which might recruit the exhaustion of your hearts, when the urgencies of business have well nigh driven the sense of judgment and eternity out of them. On the principle that man was not made for traversing in regular step and order the successive spaces of a diary, but for a nobler purpose—we forbear to assign either the length or the frequency of these holy exercises. But on the principle again, that time and all its various successions were made for man, would we ask you in practice thus to divide and thus to journalise it—and that just for the noble purpose of sustaining in life all the functions of man's spiritual economy, of upholding his perseverance in that lofty path of well-doing, which leads to glory, and immortality, and honour.

And again do we confidently put it to our men of business, whether if there were not set times for God and his bible, there ever would be any time—whether the spirit of man can thus be trusted to its own spontaneous cravings for the bread and the water of life—or if there be any such periodic hunger in the soul as there is in the body, that demands at short and frequent intervals of the aliment which is suited to it? The disease of a patient may call for regular air and exercise, and, such may be his indolence, that the stated hours must be prescribed to him, and the very assignation of the times may be the stimulus that secures his observance of them. And we all labour under a disease of the heart that calls for its frequent exposure and exercise in a spiritual atmosphere; and one sad accompaniment of the disease is its disinclination to the whole breadth and feeling of heaven's temperament; and to overcome this, there may be a weight of authority in the very hours which the patient has laid out for his own observation. And, it is most rational and fair to bring in this, as an auxiliary influence

on the side of religion. The theologian has as good a warrant for his punctualities on this matter, as the physician has for his. And thoroughly aware, therefore, though we be, that bodily exercise profiteth little in Christianity, while it is godliness alone which is profitable unto all things—yet still do we press upon you the religious keeping of a certain day every week, and of certain hours or parts of these hours every day; and for this single reason too, not that thy body may go through its set and regular prostrations, but that thy soul may prosper and be in health.

And, think not that business will suffer by the encroachments which we are now proposing to you. Think not that the elevation which a closet prayer leaves behind it on the heart, will transport away your attention from the manifold cares and operations of the counting-house; or that you will come forth from the exercises of the one, indolent and distasteful, and alienated from the exercises of the other. The bible recognises no such disjunction. On the contrary, it supposes that he who is fervent in spirit may be not slothful in business, and that in the departments both of work and of worship he alike serveth the Lord.

A religionist is thought by some to be a visionary, who is in hazard of dreaming when he ought to be doing; and who must find it ill to combine his monkish propensities to devotion with the alert and wakeful and ever-varying activities of merchandise. But this does not experimentally hold. The very power and taste for order, which has led him to apportion his day between the labours of the sanctuary and those of ordinary life, he will carry with him into all his subordinate arrangements; and the strenuousness wherewith he abides by his hours of sacredness, will also keep him most pointedly faithful and alive to the discharge of all his incumbent secularities; and that sense of duty which impels him to the observations of his privacy, so far from being stifled by them, will be strengthened and recruited for the affairs of society; and the very alacrity of feeling which these spiritual communions have given to him, will impart a satisfaction and celerity and success to the miscellaneous agencies that are before him; nor will his ever obtrusive consciousness of the eye that is above, disturb, but rather urge and exhilarate his industry the more—for he knows it to be an eye which has respect to his performances as well as to his prayers, and that the genuine spirit which cometh to him from heaven is a spirit wherewith the whole of human life ought to be impregnated. It is thus that the time which is laid out on the work that goeth on in the chamber of retirement, so far from being lost to the work that goeth on in the chamber of common merchandise, may prove a great and positive accession to it. It excites instead of exhausting; and acting on the recorded precept of diligence in our callings, the spirit that we fetch down upon the world from the mount of fellowship with God, adds a momentum to the wheels of ordinary business, and not only stimulates, but methodises all its managements. A kindred influence is caught from Him who is the author of order and not of confusion, and to whom the morning has been consecrated. The light by which the heart of the worshipper is thus visited, is not lost on his transition to this world's familiarities; but remains with him to guide the history of his day, and to shed a useful and pleasing distribution over all the doings of it.

And while we thus would propitiate the man of active life to a set time for the duties and the preparations of sacredness, we should also like the religionist to understand that the business, whether of his profession or his family, has its times and its seasons too; and he is not to practise any hurtful inroad upon these, even though tempted so to do by the strength of his spiritual appetite for spiritual joys and contemplations. It is doubtless a case of exceeding rarity; but some there are of more ethereal mould, who, for hours together, can hold converse with God and be all the while in ecstasy—who, as if broken loose from the fetters of earthliness, and evolved on a beauteous field of light and liberty, can feel such transports, and breathe such ineffable delights, as if all the glories of Heaven had descended upon them—who, as if already borne upward to paradise, can, even in the body, taste of the seraphic joy that

flows throughout that bright domain of love and of holiness; and who, feeling with Peter on the mount of transfiguration that it is good to be here, could fondly linger in the midst of a beatific imagery, at the sight of which all the cares and employments of this vulgar world were forgotten. The American missionary Brainerd, of all our modern devotees, could keep the longest and the loftiest on the wing: And from him therefore it is a testimony of exceeding weight to the lesson we have been labouring to inculcate, when he vouches for a regular distribution of hours, in which the business of the lower world might be provided for, and be made to alternate with spiritual exercises —when he vouches for this as conducive even to the prosperity of religion in the soul—when he tells us, that were it for nothing more than the health of our personal Christianity, it is well that the affairs of earth should have their turn, even in the history of him whose engrossing care is so to advance his sanctification, as that he may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

After conceding thus much to the doings and the business of the world—after giving to the work of your merchandise, and to the work of your families, the benefit of the principle that there is a time for every thing—suffer us to come back upon you who have hitherto occupied all your week-day hours with the throng and the thickening multiplicity of your week-day affairs; and demand, in the name of your best and highest interest, that not a day shall pass over your heads without its allotted time for the concerns of your eternity. We repeat it, that business will not suffer by your morning and evening sacrifice—that your ledgers will not run into confusion, though you should tie your unvaried half-hour's attention every day to the Bible—that your correspondence of penmanship with man will not run into a heavier arrear, because you have now instituted a regular correspondence of prayer with God. Time, in fact, is a tallent given largely and liberally to us all; and it only depends on our own use and distribution of it, that we find in it an ample sufficiency for every thing. Be but resolute and orderly; and if, on the pretence of an overwhelming business, you have hurt or neglected the readings and the devotions of sacredness, summon up now such a principle of arrangement as shall provide for your daily converse with Heaven; and you will find, that under the prolific virtue of such a principle, you will subordinate to your power all those complexities that are now so oppressive to you, and acquire a thorough mastery over that business of which you are now the jaded and the overdriven slaves.

SERMON IX.

The accommodating Spirit of Christian charity to the scruples of the Weak.

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—1 Cor. viii. 13.

We have already affirmed what the two principles are, on which it is that a human work is held to be of low or worthless estimation in Christianity. The first is—when, offered as the price of our justification, it tends to bring down the honour of the divine law, by calling upon it to acknowledge, and to reward an imperfect obedience. The second is —when, destitute in itself of any moral or spiritual character, it tends personally to degrade man by substituting points in the room of principles; and loading him with the observations of a paltry ceremonial, rather than infusing into his heart the essence of substantial virtue. It is worthy of being remarked however, that the first of these ingredients is greatly more obnoxious to the Gospel than the second—that it can tolerate no infringement on the ground of our meritorious acceptance with God; and so,

Paul resisted to the uttermost the practice of circumcision, when proposed by certain teachers to the church of Galatia, as indispensable to salvation. Yet the same Paul could tolerate this very rite, nay even himself inflicted it upon Timothy, when the great doctrine of the righteousness that is through faith was not endangered by it. What he resisted when it trenched on a fundamental principle, he could, were this principle kept inviolate, give way to, on the ground of expediency. The very same thing which he opposed with all his might, when made to usurp the place of merit beside the righteousness of Christ—he was on certain occasions content to let alone, when only made to usurp a place of simple occupancy beside those other attributes of conduct or character, which make out the personal righteousness of man. When admitted on the first footing, it thwarts the whole spirit and design of Heaven's jurisprudence, that will not stoop to the recognition of any human work, whatever, as being of any avail towards the acceptance of the guilty, and will be challenged on no other plea than the one and unmixed righteousness which Christ hath brought in. Whereas when some little matter of outward or circumstantial observancy is admitted on the second footing—it may at least be borne with as a harmless, though not esteemed as a very honourable visitor. Its presence, though it could well be dispensed with, may not exclude the presence of what is really good and graceful and desirable upon the character—just as the garb of Quakerism may be worn by the same individual, who wears along with it the piety and the patience and the uprightness and the primitive worth of Quakerism, with all the ornaments of its meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God are of great price. One may smile, or perhaps one may regret, that the stress of any religious importance at all should be laid either on the hue or on the pattern of vestments—and think that this question of bodily apparel, like that of bodily exercise, signifies but little. But who would ever think of any serious controversy about so downright a bagatelle; or who would not, if it softened antipathies or added to the amount of charity and good will between man and man, put on those very habiliments which have given so pleasing and picturesque a variety to this denomination of Christians? Did they assume to their peculiar dress the merit or the power, which belongs to the doctrine of Christ's righteousness, then Paul himself would have resented it as an aggression on the very foundation of our faith. But if it be only a way in which they think to adorn that doctrine, and a way that looks comely to their eyes, we believe that Paul would have let their taste and their peculiarity alone. He might have regarded it as hay or stubble lying on the foundation, along with the gold and silver and precious stones which had been deposited there, by men rich in the substantial graces of Christianity. But, instead of stooping to controvert the singularity, he, in all likelihood, would have postponed the question to that day, which shall try and declare every man's work, and manifest its real worth, whatever it may be. The man himself, standing as he does on the foundation, shall be saved. Yet all that was insignificant in any of his practices shall be consumed away into oblivion; and only that, which has the attributes of enduring excellence shall stand—for only that is capable of being translated into the great and abiding society of Heaven, where nought other worth is recognised than what is lasting as the soul, and dignified as are the faculties of its moral and spiritual nature.

So that the very same observance which, in one view, is of such pernicious import, as, if admitted, would prove fatal to Christianity by sapping its foundations, might, in another view of it, be a mere innocent peculiarity, which could either be dispensed with or tolerated according to circumstances. This will explain all that might have else appeared incongruous or veering in the conduct of our Apostle. In his fourteenth chapter to the Romans, you will find the whole force and spirit of his understanding, put forth on the casuistry of points and scruples; and we have often done homage to the rare and admirable sagacity wherewith he has delivered himself in a question, which, of all others, is most apt to elude our efforts to unrival it; and that, just from the very unimportance of its materials, rendering it difficult to bring

the light of any decisive or commanding principle to bear upon it. He was most thoroughly aware of the frivolity, in regard to substance, of all those doubtful disputations that related to meats or days or ceremonies; but never lifted the voice either of alarm or of authority on one side or other, save when an invasion was threatened on the ground of a sinner's acceptance. After having repelled this mischief, he looked to these various niceties, very much as a man of full stature and exercised discernment would look to the peculiarities of grown-up children—in which, for the sake of peace and good humour, he might benevolently indulge them—or in which, for the still higher purpose of maintaining the ascendancy of his Christian kindness over their spirits, he most wisely and most willingly might share.

There can be no mistaking the opinion of Paul, as to who was the more enlightened Christian—he who for himself sat loose to the punctualities in question, or he who was the slave of them. It is he who is strong that eateth all things: It is he who is weak that eateth herbs. Yet we never saw the qualities of mind and of principle in more beauteous combination; nor, do we conceive how the vigour of masculine intellect can be more finely attempered with the mild and merciful and condescending spirit of the Gospel—than when the apostle lets himself down from that high region of liberty whither he had been borne on the pinions of a noble and emancipated spirit; and when he who could roam with a free conscience over the wide domain of nature, and fearlessly partake of all its bounties, recollected the tenderness of a brother yet labouring in the distress and imprisonment of many difficulties, and protested that he would not eat flesh while the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend.

And there is a twofold mischief which the apostle avoids by this generous compliance with another's principle, even though he himself regards it in the light of a weak peculiarity. Should this brother be quite decided and tenacious of the scruple, that he has raised in his own mind to the dignity of an essential obligation, then will another's liberty be matter of sorrow or concern to him, and the infliction of this painful feeling ought to be avoided, wherever it can be done with propriety—for, says Paul, if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Or, if he be not quite decided—if, diffident of himself, he be readily overborne by the authority of another—if, in deference to the judgment of the stronger Christian, he imitate him in certain freedoms of observation, about which, however, he has not altogether obtained satisfaction in the light of his own mind, then, there is still a struggle between the power of conscience and the power of example; and should the latter prevail, the man is led to do a thing, not from the impulse of his clear convictions, but in opposition to his labouring doubts, and thus suffers himself to be hurried into a transgression against his own sense of moral rectitude. And thus it is that a weak conscience is wounded—for on seeing him who hath knowledge sit at a kind of meat which he deems unlawful, his conscience is emboldened to take the same liberty; and through the knowledge of him who is enlightened, the weak brother perishes for whom Christ died. For though he has given way to the indulgence, it is not with his own faith, but in the mere following of another's practice; and he secretly condemneth himself in that which he alloweth; and whatever is not of faith is sin, whence he that doubteth is condemned if he eateth, because he eateth not of faith: And, so it is good, both on the principle of following after those things which make for peace, and those things wherewith one may edify another—it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. It is this which may invest with a character of very high principle, what else would have seemed a weak and wretched scrupulosity. It is this which may stamp upon it the dignity of the second law that is like unto the first, and give the grace and the loveliness of charity even to the imbecilities of superstition. On the person of him who is its trembling votary, they may look silly enough; but they gather into an aspect of nobleness on the person of him, who, instead of frowning, as some would, the driveller away, walketh by his side; and, toler-

ating the weakness for sake of the worth wherewith it is associated, can descend from the level of his own superiority, and stretch forth to this humble Christian the courtesy of his kind and respectful accommodations.

This suggests another principle in aid of all the others which have already been adduced on the side of Sabbath observations. You know that there is a certain style of Sabbath keeping, which is regarded by many as the best and most appropriate; and that this style varies in different countries; and that, in some of these countries there is a strong popular feeling of what the things are which are essential to the becoming sanctity of this day, and what the things are whereby this sanctity would be violated. Some could not without distress of conscience walk abroad upon the fields; and some could not reduce their double to a single attendance upon the house of prayer; and some could not cast their eye over the columns of a newspaper; and some could not spend an hour upon a worldly visit, or so much as one moment upon worldly conversation. We have already, as we think, alleged enough of substantial argument for the solemn observation of this day, inasmuch as it is one of the unexpunged precepts of the decalogue—and inasmuch as every man of genuine Christian affections will love such a day, instead of feeling it a load upon his spirit—and inasmuch as a set and specific time for the exercises of piety insures a far larger amount of these exercises, than if they had been left at random to the spontaneous and desultory movement of one's own inclinations. And, to supplement all these considerations, does the text supply us with one more, the force of which must be felt by every man who is at all endowed with the philanthropy of the Gospel—and just felt the stronger, if by the lustre of his unquestionable virtues he has earned a confidence among men, and has the homage awarded to him of being both an ornament and an example of Christianity. He may without offence to his own conscience go forth on Sabbath among the beauties of nature. He may, endowed as he is with the glorious and generous law of liberty, to quell some anxiety that oppresses him, search for the article of news after which he is longing. It is even conceivable, that the withdrawment of himself from church into his own chamber, during the whole or the half of that time that is spent by others in its public services, might on some particular occasion be good for his spirit; and that he, without one remonstrance from his own heart, could then fearlessly be absent from the house of God. Nay, there might even occur to him in the train of accidents, such unlooked for urgencies of call or of intercourse, as would amount in his situation to a valid demand for worldly and secular converse—and that, too, on an hour that he else would have given to prayer and heavenly contemplation.

Throughout all these deviations from the letter of many a rigid formalist, might this enlightened Christian be able to clear his way, with a spirit unhurt, because with a conscience unviolated; and had he only his own things to look at, then with love to the Sabbath in his heart, might he still take the liberty of a son of God with Sabbath in his practice. But this very love teaches him to look to the things of others also—teaches him, while at perfect freedom in his own conscience, to be the servant even of the weakest of his brethren. And should he know that his Sabbath walk; or his Sabbath converse with the world; or his Sabbath indulgence, though on rare occasions, in the news and the business and the secularities of the week; or even his disappearance from church in any one of its services, though the time were consecrated to the secret labourings of his heart with God—should he know that any one of these freedoms would, under the cover of his revered example, embolden another to trespass against the light of his own mind, and so wound that spirit which, not yet strengthened to the discernment of what was substantially good and evil, is still over scrupulous and over sensitive about the externals of Christianity—Then in the spirit of our text would he feel, that what might else have been a mere insignificancy, was now impregnated with the very essence of gospel charity and gospel obligation—and, taking up the language of Paul, would he resolve to do none of those things while the world standeth, lest he should make his brother to offend.

You will thus perceive that the precise style and etiquette of Sabbath observation is, to a certain degree, a question of geography. The Christians of England, for example, have altogether a freer and more negligent Sabbath exterior than those of Scotland; and this is perfectly consistent with a substantial unity of spirit and of principle among them both. A Scottish religionist might on visiting, or on shifting his residence to the south, maintain without prejudice, either to himself or others, all the rigidities of his accustomed practice. But the English religionist, on coming amongst us, could not without the hazard of damaging the principles of his new vicinity, retain the laxities of his. If the mind have long associated with a certain habit a feeling of deep and serious obligation, then the surrender of that habit were tantamount to a surrender of principle, and the conscience is vitiated. Higher elements are at stake upon the issue of such a contest; and though the scruple may be a downright futility in itself, yet the whole religion of him who entertains it, may by its violation be shaken to an overthrow. It may be so implicated in his heart with all the feelings of sacredness, that the scruple cannot be torn away without the sacredness coming up along with it; and so the same authority which conjures a man out of his frivolous punctuality, might conjure him out of his faith altogether. The very same example which left untouched the Christianity of one neighbourhood, might shed a deleterious blight over the Christianity of another. So, that while without detriment to any passing observer, Wilberforce, from the lofty and exposed terrace of his habitation, might, in unison with every Sabbath feeling, inhale the freshness of its summer evens, and verily catch a sweeter influence from Heaven upon his heart, when he looked abroad on the peaceful glories of the landscape before him—yet might the same exhibition spread a pestilential virus, through the atmosphere of many of our northern parishes: And we leave you to estimate for yourselves what the cast of that delicacy is, which would lead this most tender yet most liberal of Christians, to forego the much loved liberty in which his own spirit could most fearlessly have expatiated—and tell us, whether it were narrow or it were noble, if, in his tour of recreation through our romantic territory, he, for the sake of the people's holiness, dearer to his heart than even the fond enthusiasm wherewith the face of nature is surveyed by him, he did on every seventh day suspend the enjoyment of her lakes and her mountains, and turn his Sabbath inn into a hermitage, rather than make the meanest of her peasantry to offend.

It is in this spirit that you ought to act. Beside all the previous considerations on behalf of Sabbath, you must compute the force of your example upon others—and each should contribute the decorum of his own grave and regular observations, even though at the expense of self-denial to his own tastes, that he may help within the sphere of his influence to arrest the declining piety of our age. It is woful to think at this period of benevolent forthgoing, on the part of the higher classes among the habitations of the poor—how listless after all they are of the Christianity of our city multitudes—and what woful havock they do make, by their conspicuous departure from the gravity of the olden times, on the best and dearest principles of our land. And the mischief is not confined to its operation upon the brethren, or upon those who are already Christians, in causing them to offend, and so speeding them downward along the career of degeneracy. For this growing obliteration of Sabbath, and of all those solemn and impressive vestiges which wont to characterise it, tell with malignant effect, in perpetuating and confirming the heathenism of our outcast population. It were well, for the sake of those in whom the power of reflection is so nearly extinct, as to leave almost nothing but the external senses, by which to find a conveyance for serious or pathetic emotion into their hearts—it were well for them that Sabbath should be upholden in all its venerable distinctions, and should stand visibly out with the aspect of religiousness on its very forehead. It is not we think in the spirit of a blind fanaticism, but rather in the spirit of a philosophy which can look into the secret mechanism both of our moral and sentient nature, that the opening on the Sabbath, whether

of public rooms or of public gardens, should be resisted as a measure of deadly import to the religion of the community at large; and on the same principle would we advocate that Sabbath police, which, without oppression and without violence, puts to flight those many desecrations by which the hallowed aspect of this day has been overborne. But our more immediate business is with you; and our present aim is, to lay the responsibility of the principle that we have now urged upon your consciences. Look not merely to your own things but to the things of others also; and fail not to keep up both a congregational regularity in the eye of your fellow-worshippers, and a household regularity in the eye of your family. These are sensible memorials which serve both to grace and to signalise this day of sacredness; and so multiply the influences, in favour of that great Christian institution, a reverence for which seems to be identified with a reverence for Christianity itself.

SERMON X.

On the Amusements and Companies of the World.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

Perhaps on no occasion does the Apostle evince a more delicate and discerning eye, than when pronouncing on the question of meet and allowable intercourse between his recent converts and those idolaters, who composed the great mass of the society around them, and with whom they were still connected by the ties both of neighbourhood and relationship. You see at once, how, strong in the important principles of the question, he could stand his own individual ground against all the scrupulosities of a weak and sensitive conscience. He for himself could eat the meat that had been offered to an idol—he could even have eaten it in the very temple of idolatry, and perhaps at the same table too with its deluded worshippers. What another Christian would have shuddered at as an abomination, he could fearlessly have done; and it was not any conscientious tenderness about the matter in itself, but a charitable tenderness for the points and perplexities of the feeble-minded among the brethren, which led him to abstain from it. The act he regarded as nothing, or truly as much too insignificant for any strenuous or imperative deliverance from him upon its own account. But he took into account the effect of it, in the way of exhibition to other disciples; and how it might be matter of distress and difficulty to their hearts; and how it might embolden them to transgress against the light of their own conscience, and so be matter of defilement as well as of distress; and how it might be the means of bringing them more frequently into contact and exposure, with people who had no kindred quality of spirit or sentiment with themselves; and under the force of these considerations, does this free and firm and most intelligent casuist come forth with the expression of a resolve, the principle and application of which we have already tried to elucidate—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest it make my brother to offend."

In the text that has now been submitted to you, the apostle looks to the approximation in question between his disciples and idolaters under another aspect. Viewed as a mere bodily or external act, the eating with them of the same food, or sitting with them at the same table, he seems to regard as a point of indifferency, and to number with the all things

which are lawful. But viewed not as the juxtaposition of different persons, but as the juxtaposition of different minds or of different principles, he looks to the spiritual character and contemplates the spiritual result that is likely to come out of such a companionship, and seems at once to number it among the things which are not expedient. He seems to regard it as a most unequal and unseemly assortment of people, who are wholly unsuitable and heterogeneous the one to the other. Their mere presence together in the same apartment, and their mere sitting together at the same board, and their partaking together of the same dishes and the same viands—these deeds and these circumstances of materialism, would argue in the religion of Christ, the grossness and the littleness of materialism, did it lay down its specifications and its categories for things of such frivolous observation. But when we think of the kind of moral atmosphere that is sure to gather and be formed around every assembled company; and how each individual spirit that is there, contributes a something of its own character by which to tinge and to peculiarise it; and that person cannot be approximated to person, without mind reciprocating on mind; and that there be manifold avenues of transition from one heart to another, whether by the utterance of direct sentiment, or by the natural signs of the eye and of the voice, or what perhaps is most insiduous of all, by a certain tact of sympathy with the general pulse of those who are near us and about us, in virtue of which the tone and habit of a party have a certain power of diffusiveness that tends at least to a community of feeling among all the members of it—when we think that from these causes, there is a hazard that sacredness, by moving too near to the temperament of the region which is opposite, may sustain a blight from the withering influences of the contiguous secularity—then must we see that the topic on hand, instead of appertaining to the casuistry of mere circumstantials, holds by an immediate tie on the clear and intelligent morality of principle: And, we must again award to our apostle, the homage of a high and powerful illumination—when, saying at one time that an idol is nothing and the meat offered to an idol is nothing; he could say at another, that it was both hurtful and unseemly for Christians to associate with idolaters—between whom, in all the essential characteristics of the inner man, there was no fellowship and no agreement and no communion.

There seem to be two capital reasons why the men of a Christian spirit should not by choice, and as if prompted thereto by a spontaneous impulse of their own, associate with those of a worldly or idolatrous spirit. The first is, that there is really no congeniality between the two spirits. As there is the want of a common taste, so there is the want of common topics. The children of this world nauseate the favourite themes of the children of light; and the children of light hold to be insipid at least the favourite themes of the children of this world. For a man then to delight in the air and conversation of an irreligious party, bears on it the evidence of his own irreligion. It proves him to be of a kindred quality, with those who have nothing in them that is akin to sacredness: And the very facility wherewith his spirit can amalgamate with theirs—the very comfort and pleasure wherewith he can breathe in an atmosphere altogether tainted with ungodliness—the very circumstance of him not feeling out of his element, though in an element in which, for hours together, there has not been one sentiment exchanged that bears on the things of faith or of eternity—This ought to alarm him for his own state, as carrying in it the indication of its being a state in which nature still maintains great force, if it do not maintain the entire predominancy: And, if it be the apostolical symptom of having passed from death unto life, that we love the brethren, or love the society of Christian disciples—then may the love of another society, at utter antipodes with the former, administer the suspicion of a still unregenerated heart, of a still unsubdued worldliness.

But there is still another reason, distinct from the former, why there ought to be no gratuitous fellowship between the pious and the ungodly. The former reason is, that for a man to consort, and by choice, with the ungodly, argues that there is in him still a strong leaven or remainder of ungodliness. The other

reason is, that so to consort with the ungodly not only proves the existence of a kindred leaven in our spirit, but tends to ferment it—not only argues the ungodliness which yet is in the constitution, but tends to promote and to strengthen it the more. The one reason why it is desirable that a man in quest of spiritual health should shun an intercourse with corruption, is, that his very delight in that intercourse is in itself a most infallible symptom of spiritual disease; and the other reason is, that it only indicates the disease, but serves to aggravate and to confirm it. And who can doubt of the blight and the barrenness that are brought upon the spirit by its converse with the world? Who, that ever looked on human life with an observant eye, can question the might and efficacy of that assimilating power, which every circle of society has on the individuals who mingle with it? Such, even among those who have been long under a process of sanctification—such is the downward tendency of the heart, that it is indeed a work of strenuousness to uphold its spiritual frame for a single hour; and the hazard is, that, on being laid open to the full tide of that worldly influence which descends upon it from an alienated company, the whole unction of its sacredness will take flight and be dissipated. It is altogether with the grain and tendency of our old nature, to fall in with the prevalent tone of nature's unrenewed children; and this old nature, though subordinated by grace, is not extinguished; and so, there is ever present in us, a principle of ready coalescence with the taste and spirit and affections of men who have not God in all their thoughts; and thus to bring this earthly ingredient of our constitution into voluntary contact with such men, is tantamount, in fact, to a voluntary exile or departure, on our part, from the living God. It is as if, by our own proper choice, we left the tabernacle of God, that we might dwell for a season in the tents of iniquity; and as this, by our first consideration, bespeaks where the liking of the heart lies, and is therefore to be deplored—so, by our second, it is equally to be deplored, as carrying in it a most pernicious reflex influence upon the heart tending most assuredly to deteriorate the gracious principle that is therein, if not to destroy it.

Both the one and the other of these considerations are directly applicable touchstones by which to try, we will not say the lawfulness, but at least the expediency, both of the theatre and of all public entertainments. Think of the degree of congeniality which there is between the temperament of sacredness, and the temperament of any of those assemblages which are now referred to. Compute, though it be only in a general way, the distance and dissimilarity that do actually obtain between the prevalent spirit of this world's amusements and the spirit of godliness. Bethink yourselves of any such tests as may help to clear and ascertain this matter; and perhaps one of the most effectual is, to recollect that one individual of all your acquaintanceship, to whom you would most readily award, and that in the most pure and holy and reverend sense of the term, the character of a saint; and on whose aspect, there stands out to your eye the most decided and unequivocal expression of saintliness. Then make an effort, and conceive of this very personage—either that, as one of the most delighted spectators, he drinks in the whole fascination of a scenic performance on the stage, and shares in the loudest peals of the merriment that is awakened by it; or that, with all the ecstatic glee of the most youthful in attendance, he plays off his agility and elegance in the eddying circles of an assembly. We do not ask you of any unseemliness in all this arising out of age; but we ask, if there be not palpable, even to yourselves, a most violent unseemliness arising out of the profession and the character? Do you not feel immediately awake to the utter discordancy that there is between the imagined exercises of the man in secret, and the public exhibition that he now makes of himself?

On your own impressions of human nature do you hold it possible, that a relish so decisive for the actings which are carried on in the temples of fashion, can dwell in the same bosom with a relish equally determined for the actings which are carried on in a temple of piety? Would you believe it of the man, thus the gayest of the gay, that he had spent

his morning hour in rapt and hallowed converse with Heaven; or do you ever think, that he who bears in his heart a cherished love for theatric declamation and song, carries in it also love for the psalmody of Christian worshippers? Is it not then your feeling, that, by the transition he has made, from the chamber of prayer to the concourse of fashionable gaiety, his character has, even in your eyes, sustained a grievous desecration? And what is this to say, but that you hold the atmosphere of the one place to be of diverse quality from the atmosphere of the other?—that, yourselves being judges, there is a real and substantial opposition between the temperament of piety and the temperament of a dissipation, which, however refined, is at least utterly devoid of the breath and the being of godliness; that there is a certain want of assortment between the two things, in virtue which you cannot imagine a great delight in the one, without some distaste or aversion for the other; and that, therefore, and of necessary consequence, the abandonment of oneself to the rounds of fashionable life, while it may imply no infraction in the outward act of single specific requirement to be found in sacred writ, may yet most decisively imply an utter alienation of the heart from all sacredness.

Thus much, then, for the act of delighted attendance on public entertainments, viewed as the symptom of a state of spiritual disease; and then, as to the second point of view in which it may be regarded, that is, as a course by which the disease may gather strength and be aggravated—this also may safely be referred, we think, to your feelings and your own experience. We have already presumed on the fact of your voluntary presence in the theatre or ball-room, and eager participation in their amusements, as being itself an indication, that on the morning of that day, you had not reached in your closet to the heights of saintly or seraphic communion with the God of holiness. And the question remains, whether the glee and the giddiness and and the splendour that you have witnessed and have shared, will send you back again to your closets in the evening, in better trim, if we may be allowed the expression, for another and more successful attempt on Heaven's sanctuary than before? The simple matter to be determined is, will the dance, and the music, and the merriment, and the representation, and the whole tumult of that vanity through which you have passed, and in full sympathy too, it is to be presumed, with the joyous multitude around you—will these attune the consent of the spirit to the feelings and the exercises of sacredness? Would you say of any one place of fashionable gaiety, that it makes a good antichamber of preparation for that house of solemn interview, in which converse is held, either with the still small voice that is within, or with that God above who bids you sanctify Him at all times in your heart, and do all things to His glory. These are experimental questions; and perhaps the memory of some who are here present may serve for the solution of them. And if their recollection be, that the almost unfailing result of an evening of gaiety, was to be bustled and jaded out of all their spirituality—that the whole unction of religiousness had fled; and, if prayers were uttered at all, they were lifted up in the mockery of meagre and downright heartlessness—that, in truth, there was a general riot or restlessness of their internal feelings, which nought could compose but sleep, and sleep held under the unacknowledged eye of Him who never slumbers, and still kept His wakeful guardianship over the unconscious moments of that creature, who, for a season had chosen to disregard Him—Oh, is it needful for us to suspend you any longer on the issues of a deep and doubtful casuistry—or will we not be helped forward by the responding of your own bosoms, when we say, that this cannot be the habit of one who knows himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth—cannot be the habit of one who has tasked himself to the work of nursing up his spirit for eternity?

We have all along assumed these places of public and fashionable resort, to be innocent of any specific or tangible offence against the proprieties of human life, or the delicacies of human sentiment; and, on this assumption, the most favourable for them, have we nevertheless attempted to demonstrate, how utterly at

antipodes they are with the soul and habit of one, who is singly aspiring after immortality. But should this assumption not be true—should it be found that in these haunts of assembled elegance, a regardless impiety is sometimes connived at, and sometimes a sensitive and high-toned delicacy is laughed out of countenance—should there, in the midst of all that disguise and decorum which signalises the present above the former generation, should there be the hazard of so much as one sportive effusion by which the most pure or the most pious ear could possibly be offended—Then the question instantly emerges out of all its difficulties; and the Christian, instead of having to grope his way through the ambiguities of a yet unsettled controversy, will recoil from the poisoned insidiousness, with the promptitude of as quick an alarm, as he would from the most direct and declared abomination.

Now, what is true of this world's amusements is also true of this world's companies. If there be risk, either with the one or the other, of being exposed to the language of profaneness or the language of impurity, this were reason enough, without any lengthened or recondite argumentation, why a Christian should maintain himself at the most scrupulous and determined distance from them both. But it so happens, that like as the theatre, for example, has been refined out of much of its original coarseness, so a similar process of refinement has taken undoubted effect on the conversation of private society. And when the public representation on the one hand, and the household party on the other, have thus been delivered of every specific transgression—where is the harm, and where is the hazard, it may be asked, of our most faithful and repeated attendance on them? It is when every thing in the shape of distinct or definite impropriety is cleared away, that many feel as if the cause of liberty, both as to fashion's entertainments and fashion's visits, were restored to an impregnable standing-place. It is thought, that when the enemies of any indulgence have nothing specific to allege against it, they, on that account have nothing substantial to allege against it; that in the lack of solid materials they have recourse on imaginative phantoms; and with their plea attenuated to airy nothing, all which remains to them is the fierceness of an irrational and intemperate bigotry, or a certain subtlety of argument that is far too ethereal for the grasp of an ordinary understanding.

Now, you will recollect, that on the question of public entertainments, our reasoning, in the main amount of it, was directed, not against any specific violations of propriety wherewith they were chargeable—but against them on account of their spiritual character and spiritual tendency. We affirmed, that, in virtue of that change which Christianity induced upon its converts, the once passionate votary of fashion would cease to be any longer enamoured of its dissipations and its gaieties; and that, simply from the willing impulse of his new taste, these old things would go into desuetude and then pass away. And then might this world's amusements be abandoned without any imperative deliverance at all upon the subject of them—not given up, because of any precept of Christianity that required the specific action; and yet at the same time given up, because of the power of Christianity over the affections. And one reason why it is very undesirable to behold a professing disciple as intent as before in pursuit of gaiety, is, that it is the symptom not only of no change in his habits; but much there is room to fear it as the symptom of there yet being no change in his heart. And another reason of its being undesirable, is that, besides a taste for the amusements of the world being the symptom or the indication of a worldly spirit—the indulgence of this taste seems to fix and to strengthen this worldliness the more. We are not conscious of any thing mystic or unintelligible in all this. There may be a difficulty in replying to the interrogation—What is the crime of music? Yet would you feel yourself entitled to rebuke the scholar whose love for music dispossessed his love of study, and whose gratification of this appetite dissipated his mind away from all the preparations that were indispensable to his professional excellence. And in like manner it may be difficult to state what that specific thing is in which the criminality of the theatre or the ball-room lies

—and more particularly, if refined out of all that is literally or outwardly exceptionable. And yet without any remote or scholastic process of ratiocination—may it be clearly made out, that these are among the earthly things, the liking of which is at diametric variance with the habit of him who has his conversation in heaven—that, without any departure from the wisdom which is soberly and strictly experimental, they may be denounced as a nuisance and an obstacle in the path of spiritual education—reprobated, not dogmatically but reprobated intelligently, by him who with an eye fresh from the lights of observation, and well exercised in the phases and phenomena of human character, can pronounce on the whole atmosphere of fashion as being pervaded with the breath of a diverse spirit from the atmosphere of godliness; and lift up a true warning when he says, that the more you prosecute of this world's gaieties, the more you darken the hopes and enfeeble the preparations of eternity.

And, as it is with this world's amusements, so it may be with this world's companies. It may not be possible to single out that one enactment of the statute-book which, by any specific act, or by any specific expression has been trampled upon. There may be none of the excesses of intemperance. There may be none of the execrations of profanity. There may be none of the sneers of infidelity. There may be none of that foolish talking, which to use the language of the apostle, is not seemly or convenient. It is true, that neither the doctrine, nor the devotional spirit of Christianity, may have contributed one ingredient throughout the whole of the evening's conversation. Yet all may have been pure, and dignified and intellectual—or if not a very enlightened society, all at least may have been affectionate and kind, and free from any thing more obstreperous or jovial than what a simple light-heartedness would inspire. And, then, the gravelling question is put—where is the mighty and mysterious harm of all this? By what magic of sophistry, will you fasten on such a familiar and oft-acted companionship, the atrocious characters of carnal and ungodly and anti-christian? What are the principles on which so bland and amiable and domestic a looking party are to be stigmatized as a party of unregenerates? And are we to be shocked with an affirmation, in every way so transcendently revolting—as that in a scene often realised at our own tables; and enlivened by the humour and hilarity of our own choicest acquaintances; and still more endeared by the smile and the sparkle, and the engaging loqacity of our own children—there is nought but the tainted atmosphere of corruption; and that we must shun the infection of such a circle, as we would that of so many reprobates or unbelievers who are ripening for the society of the damned.

The intelligent Christian will not fail to recognise in all his vehemence, the very repugnance that is felt in the heart of a worldly yet respectable man, when the minister tries to pursue him with the demonstration of his utter sinfulness. It is a thing not felt and not understood, by the conscience that has not been spiritually awakened, to the rightful ascendancy of Heaven's laws over all the desires of the heart, and all those affections which it charges with revolt and idolatry, simply because the things of sense have seduced them from God.

There may not be one member of an assembled company, who has not much that should endear him to our most kind and complacent regards—whether as the honourable citizen; or as the benignant matron of the party; or as the joyous and free-hearted companion, whose very presence lights up the expectation of pleasure in every countenance; or as the son, who though now verging upon manhood, has never yet cost his parents, or his sisters, a sigh, but who all of them rejoice in the opening anticipations both of his prosperity and his worth; or finally, and to complete our sketch of this happy and harmonious assemblage, may we advert to those lovely infants, who are permitted for a season to shed a beauteous halo of innocence and delight over the scene of enjoyment. And again, it may be asked, is it the mandate of stern and unrelenting theology that all this shall be broken up; or at least, that it shall be shrunk from by its own votaries, as if charged with the noxious elements of a moral or a spiritual pesti

lence? Is it for Christianity to look with the hard eye of a Gorgon on this living scene—peopled as it is with the best family affections, and with all those feelings which flow in grateful circulation around a gay and generous companionship? Or can it at all be endured that the grace and embellishment and heartfelt charms of society shall thus be scared away; and that too, at the bidding of a principle the reason and authority of which we cannot comprehend?

You will thus perceive, that by meeting our antagonist in all his plausibility, and in all his force, we have landed ourselves in what some may regard as a task of no common difficulty—which is, to steer our way between the truth of what Christianity affirms regarding our nature, and the tenderness which Christianity feels towards every individual who wears it; or to prove of orthodoxy, that it is not only sound, but amiable. You will further perceive, that we cannot advance a step upon this subject, without taking the essential principles of the gospel along with us. And it ought to reconcile the hearer to a greater length of disquisition on the one topic of conformity to the world than might else have been tolerated, that thereby the fundamental doctrines of our faith might obtain a new enforcement, when thus carried out to a new and generally interesting application. Think not, then, that we are lavishing an enormous amount of time and labour barely on one of the subordinate moralities of the New Testament—for, in truth, there can be no substantial or satisfactory management of the question, without settling it deeply upon an evangelical basis, and repeatedly appealing therefrom to the highest and most peculiar principles of the evangelical system.

It must not be disguised then, that, with all the attractive qualities which each member of the company referred to may personally realise—it is quite a possible thing that there be not one trait or tincture of godliness on the character of any one of them. They may all be living without God in the world; and deriving though they do all the moral and all the physical gracefulness which belong to them from the hand of the great human architect, He may be utterly forgotten; and by a tacit but faithful compact during the whole process of this conviviality, all thought and all talk of the ever present Deity may for the season be abandoned. It is said in one of the old prophets, that they who feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. Now, how we ask, would the topics of any of our every-day companies appear in the book of Heaven's remembrance? What sort of document would you frame, by taking a full and a faithful record of its conversation? It may not be licentious, it may not be profane, it may not be enlivened by so much as one touch of scandal; and yet withal be just as remote as possible from sacredness. If it be from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and out of the whole mass of the utterance that has been poured forth, not one sentence was heard that bore upon religion or eternity—what can we infer but that religion or eternity has not been in all their thoughts? God, by common consent, has been shut out from the party altogether, and has been as little regarded, and as little recognised, as He would have been in a region of atheism.

So, you will observe, that it is just with our fashionable parties, as it is with our fashionable amusements. Both have been much purified of late years from all that is directly revolting or abominable. Both may be animated with that play of heart and of humour, which is quite accordant with the kindliness of nature. All the feeling, and all the fancy which circulate there, may be in perfect unison with those best sympathies, which go to cement and to sweeten the intercourse of human society. And yet, the whole breath of this fair society on earth may be utterly distinct from the breath of the society in Heaven. In the very proportion of its freedom from that which would alarm or repel a sensitive delicacy, may it in truth be the more pregnant with danger to the souls of the unwary. It may only engage them the more to the things that are beneath, and alienate them the more from the things that are above. And thus it is a very possible thing, that

in simply prosecuting your round of invitations among this world's amiable friends and hospitable families, you may be cradling the soul into utter insensibility against the portentous realities of another world—a spiritual lethargy may grow and gather every year till it settle down into the irrevocable sleep of death—and, without one specific transgression that can be alleged of the companies among which you move, still may you be inhaling in the midst of them an atmosphere that makes you as oblivious of judgment, and as oblivious of eternity, as if you had drunk of the waters of forgetfulness. It may not be the air of vulgar profligacy, or abandoned licentiousness, but it may be still the air of irreligion; and you, assimilating more and more to the temperament by which you are surrounded, in confirmed irreligion may expire.

This is the leading principle that is applicable to the question of indiscriminate converse with the society of this world. The love of it is opposite to the love of God; and the indulgence of the love of it serves to confirm and strengthen our enmity to sacredness the more.—In as far as it goes to indicate the disease of a worldly spirit, it is to be regretted.—In as far as it goes to cherish or to aggravate that disease, it should be forthwith relinquished by all who have at heart their preparation for the upper sanctuary. We do not say that even the most wakeful feeling of its danger, will lead in fact to a total abstinence from general company; or even that it ought to do so. But sure we are that it will very much abridge the intercourse; and that in every specific instance when it is thought right or allowable to venture upon it, it will lead to the most vigilant guardianship—to the jealousy of a spirit that forewarns and forearms itself against the hazards of the coming party—to the strictest maintenance of Christian humility and holiness and love, during the currency of its dissipations and its blandishments—and finally, to a solemn reckoning upon its effects and its influences, after that the season of its exposures has gone by.

We think it right in stating our comparison between the influence of this world's amusements, and that of this world's companies—as we have not disguised or extenuated the former, as little to shrink from giving a picture of the latter equally aggravated and equally alarming. Nay, we are not sure but that it has greater power than the other to confirm the spiritual lethargy, and to steal away the heart into a pleasing oblivion of God and godliness. The show, and the festival, and the great public entertainment may more violently discompose the spirit out of its religiousness for the time; and, acting by successive assaults upon the frame of our personal Christianity, may at length demolish it altogether. But we can conceive the disciple to be more upon his guard against a danger so direct, and so palpable—and thus better able to withstand the shock of a hostility, that renews its attacks upon him at given periods, and does so with the full-blown note and circumstance of preparation. We can conceive of him, that, even though present among the tumults and the gaieties of the public entertainment, he may come off more unhurt, than from the polite and placid circle of a very kind yet wholly unchristian society—when mind comes vastly nearer to mind; and so the assimilating power of man upon his fellows, acts with tenfold advantage and effect; and is besides inconceivably heightened by that rapid interchange of thoughts and feelings, which takes place in conversation. And complaisance sits in smiling supremacy there. And cheerfulness which the introduction of an ungenial topic would at once put to flight, has her post of long and well established occupancy there.—And who can withstand the pleasing illusions of all the glow, and of all the graciousness, which are current there? And thus it is, that the very kindliness of nature may beguile the spirit into a sweet forgetfulness of the ever present Deity. All sense of religion is charmed away from the heart, soothed and satisfied as it is amid the sweets of youth or generous companionship: And if it be a likely thing that the occasional atmosphere of a playhouse, pealing aloud with the thunders of merriment and applause, shall storm the human bosom for a season out of all its piety—then know it to be a still more likely thing of the daily atmosphere of many a parlour, that,

lighted up as it is with smiles and perfumed with the incense of mutual reverence and regard, it may stifle into irrecoverable death that piety which the other might only at intervals scare away.

And what gives additional soreness as well as subtlety to this oft recurring mischief, is, that it may not only injure the Christian, but may cause him to reflect the injury back again on those who are around him. Let him have but the name and the authority of religiousness—let it be held enough by the many that they reach the standard of his observations—let his example be quoted as the measure of a safe and sufficient imitation; and then let them witness with what kindred delight, he can give himself up, and that for hours together, to a scene of unmingled earthliness. Let him there exhibit a full and approving sympathy with the joy of creatures who have no joy in God, and share in all the busy interest they feel, about topics more paltry and ephemeral still, than is the passing world they tread upon. Let it be seen how willingly he can disport himself among fellow men, who, if his Christianity be true, are on the brink of a fearful lake, from whose devouring billows there is no other way of escape, than by the living faith and thorough regeneration of the gospel. And after all this, will it be said that no damage is sustained by human souls, from this man's easy connivance at the ungodliness of the world; or from his complacent toleration of those parties by whom a sacred or scriptural utterance would be felt as a most unseemly and most unwarranted intrusion, and so put a sudden arrest on all that hilarity which they had met to indulge in? Think you not that the cruel delicacy of this man's silence about the cares and concerns of eternity; and the countenance that he sheds by his presence on those meetings of conviviality, from which by tacit but unviolated compact religion is alienated; and the free abandonment of himself to the trifles, or at least to the temporalities which form the all wherein the carnal and the unbeliever can expatiate—think you not that these will serve to reduce still farther in the eyes of men the high topics of immortality?—and will they not foster the delusions of that practical infidelity which so abounds among us?—and do they not tend to satisfy that heart, which, did it feel as it ought, would be all awake and in disquietude about its state of condemnation?—and do they not lend a most pernicious sanction to the whole habit and history of creatures, who have taken up with the world as their resting-place; and, engrossed with the bustle of its companies and its joys, never cast one look of earnestness to the eternity that is beyond it?

And now is it time for the question—that if an unbridled indulgence in this world's companies be to the full as deleterious as an unbridled indulgence in this world's amusements—how comes it that in point of fact, a Christian, and of most entire and decided character too, may not unfrequently be seen to mingle with the one, and need never in a single instance lend his presence to the other?—How comes it that the same individual, whom, because of his spiritual taste, you will never once detect within the walls of a theatre, you may, and without, it is to be presumed, any compromise of his taste or his principle, often meet even in a carnal or common-place household party? By what clue of reasoning is it, that we shall make out the consistency of the feeling that the atmosphere of the latter is just as tainted with ungodliness, as the atmosphere of the former—with the fact that he is never known to enter within the limits of the one, while he oft is compassed round with the other, and breathes it for hours, not perhaps with great positive satisfaction, but at least with toleration or even with comfort? Surely if the element of this world's companionship be as uncongenial with that of Christianity, as is the element of this world's more public and fashionable gaieties—then should not a disciple be just as much out of his element in the one situation as in the other; and let us know therefore, how you count it an unlikely thing that a Christian should ever be found to take part among the diversions of earthliness, when you affirm of him, that, actually and historically, he may at times be found among the societies of earthliness?

The great principle by which this whole obscurity is unravelled is, that there is a mighty difference between the

act of your going voluntarily forth upon temptation, and the circumstance of temptation coming unsought and unasked for upon you. The first sort of encounter is by your own will; and you have no warrant for believing that you will be upheld in safety, against a hazard which you have presumptuously dared. The second sort of encounter is by the will of Him who has placed us among the duties and events, each of his own neighbourhood; and we do have the warrant for believing, that we shall be upheld in safety against a hazard into which we have been providentially brought. The man who looks with heedful jealousy to his way, will not rush upon temptation. But still God may suffer him to be tempted, though not beyond that which He will enable him to bear.

Now this, generally speaking, is the difference between a public amusement, and a private company. Both may be alike uncongenial with godliness—nor may it be possible to inhale the spirit, and catch the prevalent tone and sympathy of either, without dispossessing the heart of all sacredness. But to be in contact with the one, you have, speaking in the general, to make the originating movement. To bring you into contact with the other, there are a thousand foreign urgencies that have their origin without, and which come upon you in the attitude of passiveness. That you be in the theatre, there must be a spontaneous forth-going on your part; or if you did not originate the proposal, you could easily, still speaking in the general, and without offence have made your escape from it—so that if there, you are there because you choose; and, whatever seducing influence may be in this place of entertainment, you have voluntarily approached or presumptuously braved it. That you be in the private society, may be the effect not of choice, but of circumstances—a trial not of your own making, but a trial brought upon you by the arrangements of Providence—an exposure which in itself may be fully as hazardous as the other, but still an exposure that instead of courting, you rather would have shrunk from, had it not been for some call of necessity, or even some call of obligation which you could not otherwise have conscientiously disposed of. For, take notice—there is all the difference possible as to indication of character, and all the difference as to security against any pernicious operation on the character, and all the difference as to the will and countenance of Him with whom in every footstep of your history you have to do, between the movement adopted by one who at his own bidding goeth out of his way, and the movement impressed upon one by the manifold besetting influences which meet him on his way. And who shall say, that, by one sweeping and summary act of rejection, all these influences are to be cast aside? Who shall say that it is the part of the Christian, to shut his door against the stranger that has been thrown upon his courtesies?—or distantly to scowl on all the convivialities which take place within the circle of his unconverted relationship?—or even fearfully, as if in superstition, to absent himself from those festivities which are made subservient to the plans and the consultations of merchandise? The path of every heavenward traveller is beset with difficulties—yet it is not his part to vault them, by one single act of rapid and resolute energy; but to walk and to feel his way through them, with wisdom and prayer to God and much circumspection: And most assuredly of all, has he failed of hitting the exact proprieties of his condition—if the aspect he bear among his fellows, be that of a morose and repulsive and unconciliating gruffness; or if he so wear the badge of his profession, as to disguise from the eye of the world the great characteristics of Christianity, as the religion of kindness and the religion of liberty.

It is no infringement upon a man's liberty, that he is led by the impulse of his own taste; and so, with a taste that disinclines him from the society of the world, does a Christian, in the full exercise of freedom, keep aloof as much as he may from companies, with whose spirit and with whose favourite themes he cannot amalgamate. Neither is it any infringement on a man's liberty, that he is led by the impulse of his own fears, to shun an exposure by which he may hurt or hazard the very dearest interest that his heart is set upon; and so, still in the full exercise of freedom, may he

cultivate to the uttermost his distance from a society, the very breath of which serves to taint, and to reduce the spirituality of all his affections. Thus far, you will allow that he keeps on the high walk of reason and principle—not at all recoiling like a man of points, and with slavish or superstitious fearfulness, from the mere act of worldly association; but reflecting like a man of sense and observation on the spirit or tendency of the act, and laying down the general habit of his life accordingly. And it is thus, that wherever he can, he will of his own independent choice seek for his companionship among the godly rather than among the ungodly; among those who are travelling to Heaven, rather than among those who grovel in the dust of this perishable earth; among the generous aspirants after the holiness of a divine nature—rather than among those who care for nothing higher in grace or in virtue, than the equities of human business or the civilities of human neighbourhood.

Yet it may often happen, that, instead of him seeking after the companionship, it is a companionship which has beset and closed around him—instead of a temptation upon which he has voluntarily gone forth, it may be a temptation into which he has been providentially brought, a thing not of will, but of circumstances; which, though he had no call of duty to create for himself, yet, now that they are created for him by another, he has no call of duty to make his escape from—but the contrary. And it is here that the strength and the sacredness, and the liberality of the Christian spirit, will come into manifestation; and he will prove how nobly he stands exempted from any wretched scrupulosity about the act, and that all which concerns him is the enlightened guardianship of his own heart against the consequences; and most gratefully will he mingle with the society to which the hand of some fortuitous, or perhaps some duteous necessity, has brought him; and decorate the scene not upon which he has entered, but rather to which he has been carried, by the living light of his own Christianity and the loveliness of its moral accomplishments; and, walking to those who are without in a wisdom that he has already prayed for, will he be upholden through all the delicacies of an intercourse, which, at times, it may be necessary to have, but which he knows it were most hazardous to indulge in. And thus, while called upon to love not the world, and to dread a contamination to his own spirit, should he for the sake of its gratifications, volunteer his presence among its companies; yet, through these very companies will he pass unhurt, when either the calls of duty or the necessities of business have so involved him. That world which, at all times it were unlawful to court, ceases at these times to be a forbidden territory; and, teeming though it does, with the elements of moral evil, it is often by the arrangements of Providence the field of Christian warfare—that appointed scene, among the duties and the dangers and the difficulties of which, the soldier of Jesus Christ is trained and disciplined for the services of eternity.

The apostle Paul seems, in one of his epistles to the disciples at Corinth, to look on their occasional convivialities with the men of the world as unavoidable; and that it was not possible entirely to give these up, without going out of the world altogether. The honest experience of those who now hear us, will be the best authority which they can consult upon the question—whether this is or is not in some measure still the place and the predicament of Christians—whether it were possible or even right, to cut with the intimacies of relationship—or if the urgencies of business do not indispensably require the acts of festivity, as well as of fellowship, with unconverted men—or if it were doing a service either to one's own spirit or to the cause of that gospel which he is bound to adorn, did he keep morosely aloof from the traveller who has been recommended to the protection of his roof or the politeness of his courtesies. Bring a free and a fearless spirit to these investigations. Never lose sight of Christianity, as being, not a religion of acts, but a religion of principles; and that whenever the latter can be guaranteed from injury, it regards the former with a most smiling and benignant toleration. Be very sure that there is a way of being rightfully acquitted of all this casuistry, without escaping from it into a cell or a hermitage. This is an alternative from which our great apostle most evidently

declines; and it is in striking conformity with his deliverance* that our Saviour prays on behalf of his disciples—not that they should be taken out of the world. He only prays that they should be kept from the evil of it.

* See 1 Cor, v. 10.

SERMON XI.

On Christian Conversation.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasonedwith salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."—COLOSSIANS iv. 5, 6.

We trust, we may have now made it abundantly palpable, that a man of truly spiritual taste will not cultivate a voluntary and habitual companionship with the children of this world, save from an impulse of duty, or from the design of rendering to them a Christian benefit. But whether he move forward to their society or not, their society will often close around him; and that, in the course of opportunities which he ought not to decline, and under providential arrangements that he neither can nor ought to control. And, when thus implicated, the question is, how shall he acquit himself so as to walk in wisdom to those who are without?

In the observations which follow, we shall restrict ourselves to the wisdom of speech as distinct from the wisdom of conduct; and that the apostle had the former chiefly, if not exclusively, in his eye, we hold to be apparent, from the second of these two verses—"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

From this passage it would appear, first, that mere sincerity and strength of Christian affection are not enough of themselves, to carry us aright in our walk and conversation to those who are without. There is much to be gathered from the selection which the apostle here makes of that one attribute, by which he would have the deportment of Christians towards those who are without, to be characterized. It is the attribute of wisdom. It would appear that zeal is not enough,—that affectionate earnestness is not enough,—that the fervency of our desires for the glory and interest of religion, is not enough. Had we nought to do but to resign ourselves to the impulse of these, as the sole actuating principles of our converse with the world,—then might we just give unrestrained and unregulated vent to that abundance of the heart, out of which the mouth speaketh. And thus, many would be the effusions of warmth and of vehemence that should break in upon the ear of general society; and daring, as well as frequent, would be the inroads of Christianity on those festive boards, where now, the topic were a very strange and before unheard-of novelty; and often, would there come forth at random, from the lips of some honest and desirous believer, such an utterance, as, in our present habits of intercourse, would lay a freezing arrest on the whole current of the foregoing conversation, and leave the adventurous zealot to fill up, as he may, the pause of silence and astonishment that he himself had created. Such eruptions were certainly more frequent amongst us, but for the delicacy, or rather, perhaps, the cowardice of Christians. Yet there is a higher principle than either of these, which should go a certain length to repress them. The words that are uttered should be words in season. The man who speaks them should know how he ought to speak. So, that the apostle does not confide the matter of religious conversation to zeal or earnestness alone. And, accordingly, in the text, he singles out wisdom, if not as the impelling, at least as the guiding principle, that should

preside over this important occasion of frequent and almost daily occurrence in the walk of Christians.

Secondly, there might be an excess of talk upon Christian subjects to those who are without. If there be any wisdom that is more specially meant than another in this passage, it must be the wisdom of winning souls. Now, the zeal that would urge you onward to ceaseless and indiscriminate loquacity about religion, were directly in opposition to such wisdom. Whenever disgust, or irritation, or any feeling of annoyance, is manifested at the topic, there must be a material damage inflicted upon the hearer by persisting in it. For it is very possible thus to arm him into a more resolute and stout-hearted defiance of the whole subject; and to add to the number of those unpleasant recollections wherewith in his mind it stands associated; and, in a word, to make serious Christianity more the topic of his ridicule or his resentment than before. That there lies a limit somewhere to the freedom and the copiousness of our speech on the topics of sacredness is evident, from such injunctions, as—"Give not that which is holy unto dogs"—and, "Cast not your pearls before swine"—and, "If they will not hear you, shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them." It is thus, we believe, that many a Christian conversation is repressed in embryo—even in companies where there may be a few individuals whose heart is wholly toward these things. By means of a delicate and discerning tact, the surrounding taste and disposition may very speedily be ascertained; and the way may have been sounded to an opening, and found to be impracticable; and it may have been concluded, and most rightly concluded, that there was something in the general pulse of those about you, that was unsuited to serious conversation, and forbade the introduction of it: And, thus it is possible, that the man who never breathes more congenially than in the free circulation of Christian feelings and Christian experience, may hold it expedient to keep the aspiring tendencies of his bosom in check or in inaction; and that bent, though he is on the honour of his Master's name, he may still in such circumstances count his best and fittest wisdom to be the wisdom of silence.

There are many reasons, why the topics of Christianity should not be pressed beyond a certain limit, on those who refuse to entertain them. It may often be distinctly seen, whether the effect may not be to harden their conscience the more; and to aggravate the guilt of all their previous resistance to the gospel; and to encourage those who are beside them, and perhaps not so established in impiety as themselves, to join forces against the man who has thus gratuitously offered to jar, and discompose the society, and thus to cause that which is good to be evil-spoken of, by transforming a thing of high benevolence, into a thing of offensive controversy. All these evils might be incurred by the heedless and premature introduction of this great concern as a topic of conversation. You must be aware of many companies, where the whole mischief which we have now specified, and much more, would be a certain result of the experiment in question: and this might serve to prove that along with a spirit of zeal prompting to the utterance of religious feelings, there should also be the vigilance of an enlightened wisdom to regulate, and sometimes to restrain it.

But, additional to this, there is a very wide gradation in the amount of that welcome, which different people will give to Christianity, and in the kind of topics they are prepared to listen to with pleasure, or at least with toleration. Some will bear to be addressed on the highest mysteries of a Christian's experience, and can sympathise with the utterance of his most saintly and spiritual affections. Others, without much experience, but with much earnestness, can suffer to be spoken to of the urgent and awful importance of the gospel, and to be told of its high demands on the attention of guilty creatures—who are so fast speeding their way to death and to the judgment-seat. Others, who would recoil from any personal exhibition either of their feelings or their fears, would not refuse to take up Christianity, with that calmer sort of interest which attaches to a matter of intellect, or a matter of spe-

culation—and thus an opening may be had, and room for conversation may be found, in the doctrine of the Bible, in the meaning of its passages, in the evidence that there is for its authority and inspiration.

Many more there are, who would decline from such an argument as this, but who would give their attendance throughout all those outworks of the subject, which might be denominated the environs of Christianity; and the man who is all things to all men, might, at certain moments of this excursion, along with the topics of patronage, or pauperism, or civil and ecclesiastical polity, give his timely thrust to the conscience, and make his skilful transition to the very essentials of that question, on which there turns the good of a sinner's eternity. But still you must perceive there is need for wisdom, as well as zeal in the whole management of this intercourse with human beings; and that it is not enough for the heart to be full of sacred affections, but that further than this, the way in which its abundance shall be discharged upon others, should be intelligently gone about. It must be quite evident that no good is done by the effusion of this Christian adventurer, unless he carry the willing regards of his company along with him, unless he have felt this way to a certain measure of acceptance for those high themes on which his heart is set most desirously; and that there are distinct intimations in the awkwardness or restiveness or embarrassed silence of the party, against which it were utterly vain to attempt their religious good by talking of religion, as it would be to proselyte the stones of the field, or preach among the rocks of the desolate wilderness.

Thirdly, there may be such a difficulty of management in this matter, as to justify the cultivation of an assiduous distance from the world. And you may now see perhaps more strongly than before, the principle which may be expected to regulate the fellowship of a Christian with the children of this world. It is not to be thought of him, that he will by the impulse of his own proper taste move himself towards a society, where he has no hope either of doing good or receiving it—that he should love to mingle in person for hours together, among those with whom there is no responsive mingling of hearts at the utterance of that name, which is most dear to him—that he should not feel in a state of exile, or of abandonment, when fated to a condition, where no door of access is to be found for those themes, which stand linked to his imagination with the fondest hopes and the highest glories of his existence. In every other department of human life, you see how they are men of kindred profession, and kindred pursuit, who draw most frequently together—how dull and listless a thing conviviality is with those, between whom there is no community of feeling or of interest—how the scholar of abstract and abstruse meditation, would droop as if out of his element at some joyous festival of gay and gallant military—or the mariner would sink into downright apathy and weariness, at a meeting of agriculturalists. It is thus, in fact, that the various orders of acquaintanceship are formed—that likeness of habit and of condition is the great assimilating tie, which associates men into intimacy together—that wherever there is the greatest alliance of taste, or of circumstances, then also there is the most frequent interchange of hospitality: And all we ask is allowance for the same peculiarity among the people called Christians—that on the universal principle of men ranging themselves according to the sympathies of their kindred condition or character, it shall not be thought unnatural, if they, who are dying unto the world, shall often be found in close and separate companionship among themselves, and standing aloof from those who cling to the world as their only resting place. Let some hopeful and distant adventure be held out to our people; and a hundred families be tempted thereby to a purpose of emigation—you will instantly perceive a busier and more exclusive intercourse among them than before. They will leave to others the whole argumentation of home prices and home politics, and all that variety of home intelligence, from the feeling of which, and the interest of which, they are now upon the eve of a final disruption; and the urgent topics of the preparation, and the outfit, and the voyage, and the employments or the gains of that foreign territory on which they are to spend the

remainder of their earthly existence—these will groupe our adventurers together into many a keen and separate conversation. And who would ever think of remarking this as an oddity that was at all unaccountable? And yet it is just on the working of the very same human propensities, that we can vindicate all the exclusion and all the illiberality which are charged upon Christians. Most happy would they be, that the whole species were to embark on the same enterprise for heaven with themselves. But, if otherwise, you are not to wonder that these voyagers of immortality have much to say, that will be of mighty interest to one another, and of no interest to the world—that engrossed as they are with the preparation, and the outfit, and the splendours of that eternal city whither they are bound, they who thus walk by faith, and not by sight, should talk often together—that, save when the leadings of duty or of Providence are upon them, they should never feel moved to a frequent intercourse with those who are without, by the leadings of their own inclination—and that but to gain more recruits to the expedition on which they have entered, they should seldom mingle in those societies where God is forgotten, and where all sense of eternity is suspended.

Fourthly, what adds to the difficulties of our walk among those who are without, is that while an excess of talk on Christian subjects may disgust them—there may be such a deficiency of talk as is tantamount to the denial of Christ. And what adds to the perplexities of a Christian disciple upon this subject is—that, whereas, if in general company he should say too much, he may injure the cause that he should labour to recommend—yet, if in the same company he should say too little, he may incur the guilt of denying the Saviour. He may deny Him by his silence. He, at least, if silent, abstains from confessing Him—and then to think of the appalling denunciation that whosoever confesseth not Christ before men, neither shall Christ confess him before the angels which are in heaven. And it is often shame, too, that restrains his utterance—that shame of the Saviour as his Lord, which shall make the Saviour ashamed of him as His disciple—that fear of man which is a snare—that delicacy which recoils from such an exhibition of his feelings or of his faith, as causes him to falter from the intrepidity of a firm and consistent profession—that cowardice, which might not have shrunk from a gospel testimony under the threats of an inquisition in ancient Rome, but which will shrink from the same testimony under the terror or the tenderness or the undescribable restraints of a drawing-room in modern Christendom—that nervous imbecility which would not have succumbed at sight of the grim apparatus of martyrdom, but which does succumb to the might and the mystery of that spell, wherewith the fashion of this world hath subordinated all its votaries.

It is the dread of his own treachery to Christ—it is the secret consciousness of a misgiving from His cause in the presence of its enemies—it is the felt urgency of the obligation to do all and to say all in His name, contrasted with that fearfulness by which he knows that he is actuated—These are what might often impel him to disburden his conscience, by breaking forth on the ears of an astonished party, with the utterance of his distaste for the world and the world's vanity. But aware at the same time that it is of mightier importance to win others than to relieve himself; and that he is bidden to be wise as well as courageous; and that he ought not to outrage the feelings which he can possibly conciliate; and that his way is not clear through the mazes of a dilemma which he still finds to be inextricable—It is under the contest of these deeply felt and oft experienced difficulties, that many a conscientious disciple has retired to as great a distance from this world's majorities as he may—declining the general society that can be avoided, just as he would some missionary ground that is found to be impracticable—and praying for the guidance of the wisdom that is from on high, through all that society which he neither ought, nor is able to abandon.

Fifthly, we must not abandon in despair the cause of making a general impression on the world, even through the medium of this world's companies. And in the midst of all this helplessness,

there is one thing which the Christian never must abandon—the cultivation of every opening for the Christian good of his fellow men. If in pursuit of this object, he have hitherto knocked in vain at the door of general society, he may retire for a season, but to arm himself with strength and wisdom for a fresh attempt on that which he yet has found to be impregnable. It is possible that he himself may not be ripe for such an experiment—not yet enough of Christian decision—not yet enough of simple dependence upon God—not yet enough of sacred benevolence in his own heart, which beaming forth in unquestionable evidence on all whom he addressed, might propitiate their respectful hearing, to the urgency wherewith he bore upon them—not yet enough at ease in his religion, so as to come forth spontaneously and with the full command of all his resources in the face of resistance and ridicule.

It may only be one man in a hundred, who could acquit himself of all the delicacies of such a task, or act the part of a Christian apostle when seated at the board of hospitality. But though there should be only of such a very few who are now hearing us, yet, let us give these to understand, that the vocation for which God hath accomplished them, is of importance as high, as that of those hardy adventurers who bear the tidings of the gospel to distant lands—that to carry the doctrine of Christ with acceptance into the heart of our alienated companies at home, were an achievement as much to be wondered at, as to carry it abroad among the deepest recesses of Paganism—that to cross the sea, and to penetrate the desert in quest of proselytes to the faith, is not an enterprise more daring, than to scale those moral barriers which lie around a polite and lettered society, and there to propound the terms and the mysteries of our faith, in the midst of an assembled audience. And, if one may judge from the aspect of the times, the day is not far off when a talent like this will find scope and matter for its exercise—when the demand for Christian information will become more intense, and the realities of the gospel will challenge a larger space in the affairs and the conversation of men—when the veil shall be lifted off from many eyes, and the things of eternity shall be revealed in all the commanding magnitude which belongs to them—and in return for the wisdom of those who are the friends of Christianity, the Spirit shall subdue under them the will of its enemies.

Lastly, much is to be done through the medium of private and affectionate converse. For meanwhile, and in defect of the talent or the hardihood that may be requisite for tabling the matter amidst the collisions of general society—it were well if every devoted Christian laid himself out to Christian usefulness, on every occasion that he felt himself able for; and more particularly, if unfit to brave the exposure of himself on a wider and more conspicuous arena, that he distilled the sacredness of his affections through the privacies of individual acquaintanceship. Here too, often is there the barrier of a formidable delicacy in the way of a full and explicit communication; and never at times is it felt to be stronger than between the nearest of kindred; and it absolutely looks as if withheld by infernal sorcery, the man cannot though he would unbosom himself to those of his own blood, on the topic of their highest and mightiest concernment. And yet were this accursed incantation only broken; and did each mind step forth from its obstinate hiding-place; and could the one friend burst loose from all the restraints which heretofore had held him, and pour of his Christian fervency into another's ear—may it be found that the man whom you never could have arrested in the midst of other company, will when spoken to alone, offer a glad and grateful welcome to your message: And, precious reward of intrepidity and faithfulness, may we reclaim a brother from the error of his way, and cause Heaven to rejoice on a new accession to the great spiritual family.

And here we must remark, as an encouragement to more frankness and freedom than at present do obtain throughout society in the utterance of religious sentiment, that often, in quarters where it was least expected, is it found to be met, not with toleration merely, but even with thankfulness. It is, therefore, worthy of an occasional experiment, though it should be hazarded in companies which you fear to be most alienated. It is hard

that while trade, and agriculture, and politics, and science, all find such ready and respectful acceptance in the converse of society—no place and no entertainment should be found for Christianity; but, for ought that is known previous to an attempt, this may be as much due to the despair of her friends, as it is to the dislike or resistance of her enemies. It were too much to try the establishment of a monopoly in her favour; but why, amid the free and abundant circulation of other articles, should this alone be treated as contraband? And therefore it were not amiss, that a man of sense, and colloquial firmness, should at times reconnoitre the party by which he is surrounded, and actually propounding that theme which is dearest to his bosom, should adventure himself on the currency and reception that it may meet with. Let it be done with ease—let it be done with breeding—let it be done, not in the spirit of fearfulness as if for the relief of an oppressed conscience, but done in the more generous style of one who loves the fellowship of his species, and should like to raise every member of it to the delight of his own exercises, and the dignity of his own contemplations. We are aware that with all this to recommend it, the attempt may misgive, and a sudden arrest be laid by it on the flow and facility of conversation, and the adventurer be instantly made to feel as if the door of access was shut against him. But there are times, and there are places where it is otherwise; and where unexpected welcome is given to the utterance of seriousness; and where a responsive feeling is awakened, and room afforded for the lifting up of a gospel testimony; and delight both courteously expressed, and cordially felt at this novel style of entertainment; and the discovery made, that the general silence of this world's companionship on the high topics of eternity, may be sometimes as much due to the want of intrepidity in the one party, as to the want of disposition in the other. So that on this untrodden walk of Christian philanthropy, something may be achieved. "The field is the world;" and there may be places on the civilized region of it, more inaccessible, than on the most remote countries of its savage and unknown territory; and the ocean or the wilderness which separate from the latter, may not be of more difficult transition, than are the thousand artificial delicacies which obstruct the pathway of communication to the former. And, thus the zeal and the devotedness, and withal the wisdom of a most accomplished missionary, may be as indispensably called for, in a service which ought not to be neglected, as altogether unpromising; and, in the face even of its many discouragements, ought not to be abandoned in despair.

And let us specify one thing, which would do much to clear and facilitate the way to such an enterprise as we are now recommending. Its heaviest obstacle by far, is the deep and the deadening silence that often ensues on the first utterance of a religious sentiment. The adventurer must be supported by the co-operation of your replies, or the experiment is abortive. That he should be left to sermonize at the board of free and equal companionship, is altogether out of the question. It is not a dissertation that is wanted, but a dialogue—a thing that is sustained by the play and the colloquial interchange of human sentiments—the reciprocation of mind with mind, insomuch that a contest with well-bred infidelity, were not half so insupportable, as this formal and ministerial harangue in the midst of a dumb-struck auditory.

Were it but a question that marked the interest of the hearers, it might serve as a stepping-stone, and an encouragement to the process; and you cannot but perceive, how much out of keeping it were with the whole character and complexion of a party, if the speaker shall be abandoned to work his long and solitary passage through the still medium of a freezing and hopeless taciturnity. The thing in short demanded and felt to be necessary is, that a topic connected with Christianity, shall be taken up as easily and fallen in with as readily and prosecuted as freely, as any other topic of human interest or speculation: And just as the politeness of genteel and cultivated men forms, in general, a sufficient guarantee against the disturbance that might be excited by the acrimony of a heated partizanship in politics—so, under the shelter of the same guarantee, religion in its piety, or religion in its great and essential principles, may be talked of, with-

out involving the circle in the offence or irritation of its controversies. The thing may be attempted; but without the contribution of some such welcome and acceptancy as this, the thing is utterly impracticable. The very feeling of such a barrier, is intimation enough of the topic being a fruitless one; and, just because the moral clime is unsuited to it, that, to be productive of a blessing, it must be borne away to a soil which is open to receive it, where it may find the harbour of another circle of acquaintanceship, and be made to thrive in the atmosphere of another society.

Now, this were one good effect that should result from a more free and intrepid utterance on the part of Christians. There would then be a more clearly ascertained line of distinction between those who inclined to religious conversation, and those who disrelished it. There is nothing that one nauseates more, than the companionship of those who have their own favourite topics—for which he feels no taste, and upon which he can hold no intelligent sympathy whatever with those who are around him. Many of you must recollect how tiresome and disgustful it is—when the attentions of a whole party are monopolized by a few, whose peculiar likings or peculiar acquirements, invariably lead them to one walk of remark or argument, that is just as insipid to all the others, as would be the gibberish of an unknown tongue: and, be it for example, the jockeyship of field sports, or the politics of a city corporation, or some rare topic of connoisseurship that none but themselves can either value or comprehend—you both see what a ready and rejoicing coalescence they have with each other, and at the same time, how ill they are fitted to amalgamate with general society. And it is thus that the intimacies of social life are formed; and, just as it should be, that the spectacle is held forth of men drawn into more close and separate association together, by the tie of their similar pursuits or similar predilections; and all we want is, that Christianity shall not be smothered under the weight of those many delicacies, which have interred her in deep concealment from the notice of society, and in virtue of which her friends remain unknowing and unknown to each other. It were right, that they, too, should feel their way to a common understanding; and be indulged in the free and frequent participation of their mutual sympathies; and should be seen aggregating together in clusters—even as you see men of a kindred character or kindred profession in all the other walks of the community. It is most true, that if they give way to the abundance of their heart in general conversation, they will leave many at a distance, and perhaps many as impatient and as distasteful of their presence, as you would be of those who are ever deafening their company with topics that no one savours, or no one cares for. But thus it is that the needful discoveries are made; and the men of a common taste find out one another; and, in obedience to the impulse of it, they naturally and freely resolve themselves into distinct circles of companionship; and the line of demarcation between the decided and the adverse comes forth into visibility; and, precious fruit of that more frank and fearless exhibition of our Christianity which we now recommend, would they who are hostile, spontaneously, and of themselves, fall away, and they who are friendly, as spontaneously groupe themselves into associations of willing and congenial intercourse.

And lest this should appear like raising a barrier of everlasting separation between the church and the world, let us here shortly evince the style of management that obtains, we have heard to a great extent, in the metropolis of British society. There, devoted Christians do associate more exclusively with each other, and keep far more distinctly and decidedly aloof from the minglings of general acquaintanceship, and maintain a sort of hallowed and secluded ground that does not lie open to the random invasions of those who are without; and yet is not closed round by a fence that is utterly impregnable. For the practice, as we understand it, is so to arrange the festive or the social party, as to comprehend a few from among the wide and general outfield of humanity, though not so many as to overbear its character of sacredness. Let but the preponderancy be secured for the Christian spirit and conversation of the meeting; and, up to this indispensable object, may admittance

be granted even to the farthest off in alienation from the concerns of eternity. The experience is, that, however difficult for the friends of the gospel to face this world's majorities, with an incorrupt testimony and a pure or consistent exhibition in its favour—it is not so difficult to charm, or even to assimilate the loose and scattered minorities of the world, when the collective influence of a number of Christians is brought, as it were, separately and piecemeal, to bear upon them. The very fact of their presence, their very acceptance of the issued invitation, may argue a degree of predisposition, which only needs to be fostered by the delicacies of judicious kindness, into an established attachment for the ways of peace and of true wisdom. So that it is not necessary to abandon the world to itself, or to lay a stern interdict on all its approximations. There is a way in which, consistently with all that has been urged or advanced by us, the very hospitalities of human intercourse may be made subservient to the evangelization of our species; and often when the voice of expostulation has fallen from the pulpit without efficacy, has it been found of Christianity that she has other graceful and happy exhibitions at command, wherewith to soften the heart of man out of all its prejudices—that what cannot be done by the verbal demonstrations of the minister, may be done by the personal exhibitions of worth and mildness that are frequently held out in the converse of private society. And when religion is thus blended, as it sometimes is in the upper walks of life, with the fascinations of taste and elegance and literary accomplishment—such a union of saint-like piety on the one hand, with the polish and the ornament of finished cultivation on the other, has often sent forth an influence upon the beholder on the side of that gospel he wont to despise, which he has felt to be utterly irresistible.

SERMON XII.

On Christian Casuistry.

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—ROMANS xiv. 5.

THERE is a kind of minuter casuistry which it is extremely difficult to handle from the mere want of something very distinct or tangible to hold by; and about which there is the greatest degree of indecision, and that just from the loss at which we feel, to get any decisive principle of unquestioned evidence and authority to bear upon it—And, so it is, that even the Christian mind fluctuates thereanent, and exhibits itself upon this subject in a state both of vacillation and variety. For while one class of the professors are heard to declaim, and to dogmatise, and most strenuously to asseverate with all the readiness of minds that are thoroughly made up on the matters alluded to—there is another class of them who cannot assume this certainty without cause being shown, who must have something more to allege for the vindication of their peculiarities than the mere conventional Shibboleth of a party, and who wait till a clear reason approve itself to their judgments, ere they can utter with their mouths a clear and confident deliverance.

Some may have already guessed what the questions are to which we are now adverting. They relate to the degree of our conformity with the world, and to the share which it were lawful to take in its companies and amusements. You must be aware on this topic of a certain unsettledness of opinion; while we know of none that wakens a more anxious degree of interest and speculation among those who are honestly aspiring after the right, and are most fearfully sensitive of the wrong in all their conversation. And if to tenderness of conscience, they add a certain force of intelligence, they will not be satisfied with a mere oracular response from those who

seem to be somewhat, and who speak as if from the vantage ground of their long initiation into higher mysteries. They are prepared for every surrender, and are in readiness to follow fully wherever the light of scripture, or of argument may carry them; but this light is the very thing they want, and are in quest of. It is their demand for the *rationale* of this matter, with the difficulty they feel in reaching it, that has thrown them into a kind of harassment about the whole affair from which they long to be extricated. And neither in the magisterial, but unapproved dictation of one set of Christians; nor in the yet unstable practice of another set of Christians, who are hovering about the margin that separates the church from the world, and ever tremulously veering between the sides of accommodation and non-conformity therewith—from neither of these parties in the great professing public of our day can they find repose to their spirits, because from neither, they have found effectual relief to the painful ambiguity under which they are labouring.

What has now drawn our attention more especially to this subject, is its strong identity in regard to principle with that question of Sabbath observation, which we have recently attempted to elucidate. The elements of Christian liberty and expediency, and charity, appear to be similarly involved in both, so as that we may avail ourselves of the same guidance as before, from the manner in which the apostle hath cleared and discriminated his way through the controversy that arose in his time about meats and days and ceremonies. Instead, however, of going the whole ground over again, we shall barely state, rather than argument, many of our positions—trusting for your concurrence to the recollection of what you may before have heard, and before have acquiesced in.

First, then, when the giving up of the theatre, and the giving up of public places, and the giving up of the festive and the fashionable parties of this world, are laid down for the observance of the young disciple in the shape of so many distinct and categorical impositions—it is a very possible thing that he may be thereby misled into an utter misconception of the design and nature of Christianity. For these acts of rigid abstemiousness occupy the place of works; and the punctual fulfilment of these may minister the complacency of self-righteousness, and so land us in the capital error of transferring our plea for God's meritorious favour from the ground of Christ's obedience, to the ground of our own obedience. And besides, they are such acts as do not necessarily imply any graceful or elevated morality in the individual who has performed them. With him they may be the mere heartless austerities of formal or Pharisaical devoteeship—the morose penances and self-inflictions of one who resolutely denies to his taste, that gratification which he, nevertheless, is still most desirously set upon—the stated sacrifices which are offered, not with, but against the entire current of the soul, that pines, perhaps, in secret mortification after those jubilees of mirth or of splendour, which, at the bidding of a stern, rigid, and uncompromising puritanism, he has been taught to put utterly away. It is, indeed, a very possible thing, that Christianity may thus be made to wear another aspect than that in which she smiles so benignantly upon us from the New Testament—that instead of a religion of freedom, because her only control is that of heavenly and high-born principle, wherewith she rules, and by moral ascendancy alone, over her willing and delighted votaries, she may be transformed into a narrow system of bigotry, whose oppressive mandates of touch not, and taste not, and handle not, bear no relation whatever to the spiritual department of our nature—only galling and subordinating the outer man, while they leave the inner man as remote, both in principle and affection from the likeness of God, or the character of godliness as before.

It is for this reason that we think it greatly better, with every young inquirer, at least, to begin at the beginning—to aim a blow at the root of his corruption, instead of mangling and lacerating at one of its branches—to go at once to the very essence of the controversy between him and God, even that he idolizes the creature, and with a heart set upon its enjoyments, has cast the love and homage of the Creator away from him—instead of

charging him with a matter of doubtful criminality, to put it direct to his conscience, whether the world, or He who made the world, have the most permanent and practical hold of ascendancy over him. After having reached his convictions on this point, and laid open to him the nakedness of his spiritual condition, we would tell him that the thing for adjustment at present was not the habitual attendance of his person upon places of public amusement; but the devoted attendance of his heart on the high places of a far more stupendous and engrossing idolatry, to which he was wholly given over. We should, in all these cases, feel inclined to forbear the casuistry of theatres and assemblies, and the various resorts of fashionable gaiety, as being really not the matter on hand. To make use of parliamentary language—we should be disposed, on the starting of this topic, to move the previous question—or borrowing another expressive phrase from the same quarter, we should proceed to the order of the day. The point of immediate urgency, and that should be first taken up, is his general state with God. The charge to be first brought home, is not that he is occasionally seen in a room of public entertainment; but, of far more tremendous import, that the ground which he constantly occupies is a ground of alienation from God, and from godliness. The quarrel is, not that he may sometimes be detected in one of this world's favourite haunting places—but that the world, with the full power of its seducing influences, has at all times the possession of his heart, that his only portion is there, and that there he has been living up to the present hour without any prevailing sense of God, or of eternity.

In a word, we should like for the time being, to decline with him the ambiguous controversy about public festivals and public entertainments—and that, for the purpose of sounding in his ears the alarm of an actual, and a greater controversy that is still more appalling. In short, our indictment against him has only one article—not that he has been incidentally seen in places, which lie without the territory of sacredness; but that, from that territory, he is wholly an outcast and a wanderer. With such an enquirer we should prefer dealing for the present among those solemn and undoubted realities, the very magnitude of which, both gives them an imperative power over the attention, and causes them by the eye of his mind to be more distinctly, because more forcibly apprehended. Thus, instead of trying to clear our way through the ambiguities of any subordinate question, we should like to reduce him—an arrested and a conscience-struck sinner to the question, what shall I do to be saved?—and would admit nothing else into our solution of it, than the mighty elements of his exile from God, and the way that God has taken to reconcile and to recall him.

Now, it is on the personal settlement of this question, that a great personal change takes place upon the enquirer—that a vista is opened up through which desires and delights that were before unknown are let in upon the soul—that there ensues a great moral revolution, in virtue of which, what was before shrunk from either with dislike or with terror, becomes the object of a most attractive tenderness; and what was before the object of eager pursuit and of much loved indulgence, is now regarded with unconcern, if not with positive detestation. Many, it is true, who profess the faith of the gospel, evince no such translation into another habit and another history: But there are none who actually acquire the faith of the gospel—the tendencies of whose inner man are not thereby shifted, so as to point either in a diverse or opposite direction from that they did before. Other glories than those of this world's splendour now engage the affections; and other paths than those of this world's dissipations, are now the paths of peace and the ways of pleasantness. The man who before was of the earth and earthly, now breathes with his spirit of the air of heaven; and loftier to him than the highest earthly flights of poetry or song is the music of Heaven's psalmody. He now feels his kindred atmosphere to be in the house of prayer; and that time which wont to be an oppressive load upon the heart that ever sighed for relief from the burden of its own vacancy, he can now fill up, and most congenially too, with the labours of love and the works of righteousness. It may not, however be with the fierce intolerance

of a bigot, that he looks on the amusements of other days, but simply with the indifference of one who has found his way to higher and better amusements. In the new tract to which he has betaken himself, all that we behold is the spontaneous emanation of a new taste—and not a rigorous or reluctant compliance, with any of the rigorous proprieties of formal and common-place professorship. And should the result be, that he keeps himself from the ball-room or the theatre, this result is only one among the many; and but an humble corollary out of the operation of great and noble elements. Along the whole of that march by which he has been conducted, we see nought but the impulse of generous affections and elevated principles—nor in any step of the process, whereon the passionate devotee of this world's gaieties, has at length utterly and conclusively renounced them, is there one such character of moroseness or constraint, as would ill become the religion of liberty.

Secondly, this forms another reason why we feel so much disposed to avoid any thing like a dogmatic deliverance on the subject of this world's entertainments. It gives to the general eye an appearance of narrowness to our religion which really does not belong to it. Better surely to impregnate the man's heart, first with the taste and spirit of our religion; and, then, if this should supersede the taste and affection he before had for the frivolities of life, it impresses a far nobler character of freeness and greatness on the change of habit that has taken place, when thus made to emanate from a change of heart—than when it appears in the light of a reluctant compliance with the rigid exaction of intolerance, the rationality and rightness of which are at the same time not very distinctly apprehended. Let the reformation in question, if reformation it be, come forth upon the habit of the man in this way—as the final upshot of a process by which the heart has been reformed, as the fruit of an internal change that has taken place on the taste and on the affections, through the power of the truth that is in Jesus, and whereby all old things have passed away, and all things have become new. Better thus, than by a mandate on the subject issued from the chair of authority. Better that it spring up, in kindly vegetation from the soil of the new nature, than that it be forced and driven forward at the stern call of an uncompromising or unmeaning dogmatism. Better that it come at will as the spontaneous efflorescence of a previous change upon the inner man, than that without choice and without consent, it be laid as a yoke of bondage upon the outer man. You have heard of the new wine that was put into old bottles. The wine had not yet done with its fermentation; and the leathern bottles of these days, that had lost their elasticity and were altogether hard and unyielding, did not expand to the process, but were rent asunder and burst, so that both wine and bottles were destroyed. And the same may often be the result of prematurely putting into an old and yet unregenerated man those new observations, which are in most pleasing accordancy with the whole desire and habit of an altogether Christian. The current maxims of professorship, about the total abstinence of his person from this world's gaiety and companionship, look to him as so many senseless and arbitrary impositions. The light of his mind does not yet go along with them. The high and tumultuating spirit of the man is stirred up to a revolt, against an intolerance for which he cannot see the authority of the reason. He is galled and restive under the shackles in which he has been made to fester; and for no purpose which he can understand, as at all worthy of the self-denial that has been laid upon him. He will positively not bind himself down to the attitude of being so beset and harassed; and the danger is, that, in some fit of explosive impatience, he casts Christianity, along with the lessons of this injudicious Christian tutorship, away from him. This new wine should be put into new bottles, which, without being torn, can stretch and accommodate their capacity to the ebullitions of the new liquor that has been deposited therein. In other words the man should be renovated. The mighty transition from nature to grace should take effect upon him. The great and elementary principles on which there hinges the conversion of the heart, should have told upon his conscience; and he, being ushered by the Christian

faith into the joys of the divine countenance and the hopes of eternity, the inordinate love of this world should have already given place to those high and heavenly affections by which it is dispossessed. When the new wine is thus put into a new bottle, both are preserved.

The commandment to renounce the amusements of the world ceases to be grievous, or rather the commandment itself ceases to be necessary. The man, in all likelihood, may, after this change, never once be seen at any one indiscriminate intercourse—where fashion, and finery, and pleasure, form into one blended and brilliant attraction for the assembling together of this world's multitudes. Yet it is not the scowl of monkery that he casts at them. It is not in the grim and ghastly spirit of antiquated puritanism, that he keeps his distance from them. The whole amount of the matter is, that he is otherwise employed. He is taken up with something else that he likes better. He does not ask them to withdraw their presence from the place where their heart is. And they surely should not expect him to lend his presence to a place where his heart is not. Let your theatres be purified of all blasphemy and grossness—let the gossip of your parties be free of the venom of calumny—let your games be unruffled by the fierce and frenzied agitations of desperate adventure—and let your assemblies be chastened out of all but the thoughtless vivacity of light and emancipated spirits, that love, at the impulse of music, to expatiate in fairy circles on an illuminated scene of gracefulness and gaiety: and we are not aware upon what ground he can single out and stigmatise as a monstrous abomination any one of these varieties. And, yet he may look upon them all as so many varieties of earthliness—as the occupations of a moral region distinct from the one through which he is travelling—and the delights of a clime of diverse air and quality, from that in which he can breathe with comfort or satisfaction. It may be true that he has abandoned them, yet not at the bidding of a capricious intolerance, but in the unforced and unfettered exercise of his own liberty. As the new wine is suited to the new bottle, so are the present habits to the present heart of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. In the act of giving up the fashions or the frivolities of a passing world, he only follows the high behests of the judgment and the taste and the affection that are freely operating within his own regenerated bosom—he only, in this instance, exemplifies one of the many exhibitions that come forth of their own accord, from the feelings and the faculties of his spiritual nature.

The reply that was once given by an aged Christian to the question of an anxious beginner at the work of Christianity, is quite in the zest and spirit of the principle that we now advocate. He saw his young friend to be on a hopeful career of enquiry, and had no doubt of the final result of all his conscientiousness; and perceived that he was moving aright among the great elementary feelings that relate to sin and repentance and faith; and when the question was put by him, whether he should now continue to go to the theatre, the answer was, that he might go as long as he could—an answer, we own, very much to our taste, and appearing to us as if replete with wisdom of a very high order: And, we appeal to yourselves, whether it was not greatly better, that, instead of admitting him to this doubtful disputation, he was left to the wholesome exercise of his spirit on the leading essentials of our faith, and, at length found his own way to that lofty vantage ground, whence he could descry such unfading glories as gave to his heart its full entertainment, and whence he could turn him from the now tasteless enjoyments of the world, to purer and nobler gratifications.

But still it may be asked, is it not true of all the amusements referred to, and to which so many immortal creatures have devoted themselves, that in them the spirit of earthliness has the undoubted predominancy; and that the places where they are held, leave their company on the broad way, and not on the narrow path, which leadeth to life everlasting? Grant this to be true, and that all these obnoxious assemblages were broken up and dispersed of their visitors—these visitors may still keep on the broad way; and we cannot distinctly see what is gained by drawing thousands away from the theatre and ball-room, if in the move

ment that we have impressed upon them, they shall all tarry at any point that is short of the conversion of their souls. There is a line of demarcation between the two great regions of the carnal and the spiritual; and though to the former you assign all the houses of public entertainment that ever had been reared, and so fulminate againt them till they are levelled to the dust, yet we see not the profit that accrues to Christianity, if all the worshippers of these conceived abominations still keep that side of the line of demarcation which they wont to occupy. In these circumstances, we would not like to address a worldly assemblage on the vanity of public places and public entertainments. We should take a loftier aim. We should feel as if nothing had been effected by pulling any one of these conclusively away from the theatre, if we had not pulled them across the mighty line of separation that marks off the region of grace from the region of sinful and unconverted nature. To the achievement of this great transition then, would we give our first earnestness and our first energies; and, meanwhile, holding the subordinate question in abeyance, would we try to find a way to their conscience with the appalling thoughts of a yet unchristianized soul, of a yet unprovided eternity.

Some of you may have read, in the life of the celebrated Whitfield, of the well-known attempt that he made at one of the great London fairs, when, amid all the fantastic and grotesque erections of such an occasion, he contrived to introduce a pulpit; and, braving the whole uproar of riot and ridicule excited by his appearance, actually preached for days together to the assembled multitude.—We know not, particularly, what was the subject of his addresses. But sure we are, that there was a something in them of far more comprehensive import, than that of denouncing with intemperate and untimely zeal as a gross abomination, the scenes of madness and merriment and festivity wherewith he was surrounded. He went there charged with the gospel of Jesus Christ; and his errand was not to put down one of the modifications of worldiness, but all worldliness. And if, on the strength of the great and essential truths of Christianity, he gained but twenty converts from darkness to light, he did a higher achievement, than if, without Christianizing one, he had dispersed the assemblage of twenty thousand—frightened by his menaces, but not led by the power of his ministrations to that following of the Lord fully on earth, which terminates in His approval of them at the judgment-seat, and their welcome to His everlasting habitations. He did, it is said, as the reward of his noble intrepidity, secure a goodly number of converts on that occasion. He did not break up the fair, for it is still upholden; but he did a great deal better, he gathered out of it a harvest for eternity. He did more by the conquest he made over a few hearts, than if he had only put to flight the persons of all this mighty multitude. The sons and daughters whom he turned unto righteousness, he withdrew from their former amusements, not by a movement of superstitious fear, but by a high movement of affection and principle—their favourite haunting-place having now become the house of prayer—their best-loved resort the companionship of the saints the conventicles of praise and piety.

It would need more than the nerve and the intrepidity of a Whitfield, to force a sermon into any of those places of public amusement which we have had occasion to specify in the course of our present argument. The thing is impossible, and could not be tolerated. But the fact is undoubted, both of the sons and daughters of this world's gaiety, that, among the other sportive caprices which fashion has been known to indulge in, she sometimes sends her votaries to church; and varies by a sermon on the Sabbath, the giddy round of her week-day entertainments. And should any of her enamoured followers be now listening, we would have them to know, that it is not at present with any one of those entertainments that we are now holding controversy. But we are charged with a controversy of import far more tremendous. Our impeachment of them is, because of their ungodliness. Our direct affirmation, and let them carry it to their consciences and try it there, is, that they live without God in the world; that, to the purpose of any practical influence on their hearts and on their habits, He is

not in all their thoughts; and that in the whirl of time's gratifications and of time's concerns, they have buried all effective consideration of eternity. We say that the element in which they live and move and have their being, is an element of earthliness—which, seeing that it is really in God that they live and move and have their being, is tantamount to the element of a wilful and rebellious atheism. We would warn them, that, through that pleasing atmosphere of deceit by which they are encompassed, the eye of Him who sitteth on the throne of Heaven, now looketh with an eye of clear and penetrating intelligence; and beholds in them so many imperishable creatures, who forgetful of their high destination, are pursuing the follies and the frivolities of a short-lived day to the ruin of their souls. And, it is not upon this one folly, or upon that other frivolity, that we would enter our protest against them; but, pointing direct to the citadel of their hearts, garrisoned to very fulness with no other than earthly desires, we would call their parties of pleasure and of public amusement, not so much the acts as the insignia of their rebellion—as indications of the state of an inner man that had deeply revolted against God. It is to heal this mighty breach that the gospel is declared to them—not to achieve a few circumstantial reformations in their history, but wholly to regenerate their hearts; and from the habit of those who mind earthly things, so to make all old things pass away, and all things to become new, as that their conversation shall be in Heaven, and their treasure there.—Be first Christians, and then we may satisfy your curiosity about the lawfulness or the unlawfulness of theatres. Give up the love of the world for the love of God, and then may we say in how far this world might be used without abusing it. Let the balance be fairly struck between time and eternity; and after this mighty calculation is over, then may we have heart and leisure for pettier calculations, and say what of time may be given to recreation, and what of it to those solemn exercises which have a direct bearing on eternity. Consider your ways.—Try your hearts by the standard of God's spiritual law. Look to Christ as the Mediator, who, by His sacrifice and righteousness can alone settle all your deficiencies. Turn from folly and iniquity unto Him, and He will usher you unto the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace.

But it is now time to have done with this long excursion, among the details and the difficulties of a casuistry, by which the Christian mind has oft been exercised. For, let it never be forgotten, that a heart with rightly-set affections and desires is after all the best of casuists. If the heart in its various regards be as it ought, this is our securest guarantee that the history in its various manifestations will be as it ought. The man who is stationed at the fountain, and whose business is to keep it in living play, may abandon it for a time to clear and trace out through their proper windings the channels by which the water ought to run. But it is possible that while he tarries at this employment, the fountain may run dry—and of what avail are all his conduits, and all his lines of accurate and well-drawn conveyance, if there be nothing to flow through them? It is quite obvious that his main and important office is to feed and stimulate the fountain—that there his presence is most frequently, and most urgently required—that it is the post from which he ought never to prolong his absence beyond the rigid necessities of the case—and that if for the perfection of the whole apparatus, it be at any time expedient that he should move away to its subordinate parts, or even its more distant extremities, it is indispensable to the whole use and purpose of the apparatus, that he ever and anon reiterate on the well-spring, where the whole being and activity of the operation are upholden. And how much more true is this, if in fact the impetus of the waters shall force a right descent and direction for themselves; if, by the might of their own currency, they can wear a deep channel, and clear away all the obstacles to their progress; if without artificial guidance, they can spontaneously, and by the pure weight of their own native momentum, find their own way to their best and their fittest destination.

Now, we must not forget, while lingering among the turns and the windings of Christian casuistry, that there is a place whence the impulse may proceed of

strength enough to overbear its difficulties, and to force a way through all its dark and ambiguous passages—that the new-born desire of a Christianized heart is worth the catalogue of a thousand solutions to a thousand perplexities—that the best way of restoring to light and to liberty the conscience of man, is to enthrone love in his bosom—and that in willing discipleship to this gentlest, yet most persuasive of masters, will every new creature find the best and readiest outlet from all the bewilderments that meet him in his progress, through this great labyrinth of our earthly pilgrimage. Give us but once a taste for sacredness—and we need scarcely speak on the details of sabbath observation to him who already loves that hallowed day, to whom all its exercises are sweet, and all its opportunities are precious. Give us a heart set on the things that are above; and what calls for warning against the amusements of the world, the man who in the midst of higher and better engagements feels their utter insipidity? Or gives us an affection for God in Heaven, or for the likeness of God in those who are under a process of renovation to His image upon earth—and we are already anticipated in all our dissuasions against a preference for this world's companionship, or an indiscriminate converse with its festive and fashionable societies. America, said Lord Chatham, must be conquered in Germany. The way to subordinate the human history, is to obtain possession of the human heart—and better than this continued skirmishing among the details and outposts of casuistry, would it be to ply with the right engine, that central and commanding fortress, which looks down with imperial sway over the whole territory of this extended warfare.

So that, after all, we may have lingered for too many sabbaths on those details of pious or prudentia. observation, over which the single principle of love in the heart might have given the entire mastery. Only let this fountain be replenished with sacred affection, and there is no fear, it may well be thought, of the uniform sacredness that will emanate therefrom on all the diversities of human conduct and experience. To this object, then, ought the main force of every Christian teacher be directed—and could he only enlist the will of his hearers on the side of God, then may we be sure, that though he should trace in description of all the varieties of their outward way, it will mainly and substantially be a way of godliness.

And we trust that this observation will serve as another argument, for the mighty importance of our much and urgently insisting on the fundamental articles of Christianity. The great achievement is to possess your hearts with the love of the gospel, and this can only be done by possessing your understanding with the truths of the gospel. We know not how to win your regards to God, but by representing Him as God in Christ reconciling the world. We know not how He can become the object of your tenderness, but by His ceasing to become the object of your terror. We know not how your fond affection to Him can be made to arise, but by your fearful apprehensions of Him being made to subside. In other words, the patent way of finding access for love into your bosoms, is to find access for faith—and could we only obtain credit for the message of peace with God, through the blood of a satisfying atonement, then, by the moving forces of gratitude and good will should we reach a far more effective mastery over all the details of the Christian life, than all the skill of cunning men, all the wisdom of learned moral artificers could possibly obtain for us.

SERMON XIII.

Of the Flesh and the Spirit.

"For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."—GALATIANS vi. 8.

THE term "flesh" has obtained a wider signification than it previously had; and, corresponding to this, the phrase of our text, "the desires of the flesh" has obtained a proportionally wider range of application. These desires, in fact embrace one and all of the enjoyments which are competent to the natural man while he is in the body. Had the species remained innocent, there would have been nothing, either in these desires or enjoyments, that would have either thwarted the will of God, or carried any forgetfulness or disinclination towards God along with them. But as the matter actually stands, it is far otherwise. With the desire that we have for what is agreeable, there mingles no desire and no liking towards God. With the enjoyment that we have in it, there mingles no remembrance and no pleasure in God. The thing is desired for itself; in itself the heart rests, and terminates, and has full complacency; and the enjoyment is in every way as much detached from the thought of God, as if the belief of God had no place in his creed, or as if God Himself had no place in creation. Now this is not merely true of the grosser appetites of nature. It is true of every appetite which has for its object something separate from God; of every appetite which points to any one thing that the world has to offer, while God is not recognised as the giver of it, or as having that superior claim upon our affections which the giver has over the gift; of every appetite in the prosecution of which and the indulgence of which, the mind may all the while be away from the consideration of God. Now this applies, not merely to the desires of the epicure, and of the voluptuary. It belongs as essentially to all the other desires of unrenewed nature. There may be as little of God, for example, in the delights of literature, as there is in the delights of sensuality. If it be true that it is He alone who doeth the will of God that endureth for ever, the one may be as little connected as the other with the eternal life of our text. Both may be equally fleeting in their duration; and both may pass away with the vapour of our present life, when it passeth away. They may end when the body ends; and thus it is, that many generous as well as many grovelling desires, that the propensity of the heart to power and glory or to the objects of lofty ambition, may, as well as the lowest propensities of our animal nature, come under the brief but comprehensive description of "the desires of the flesh."

Recollect then that in this extended sense, we employ the term flesh throughout the whole of our discourse. All the desires which it is competent for a man to feel, who has no care, and takes no interest about the things of God or of another world, are the desires of the flesh. All the enjoyments of which man is capable, apart either from the duties or the delights of religion, are the enjoyments of the flesh. They may or they may not be the enjoyments of a shameless and abandoned profligacy. The line of demarcation between flesh and spirit, is not that by which the dissipations of life are separated from its decencies—but that by which all the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of our present life, in sense and in the creature, but apart from God, is separated from the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of the spiritual life with God in Heaven. A man may be wholly occupied by the former desire, and be wholly devoid of the latter—in which case he is of the flesh and not of the spirit; or, to make use still more of the phraseology of scripture, he is carnal and not spiritual; or he walks by sight, and not by faith; or he is one of the children of this world, and not

one of the children of light; or, finally, he minds earthly things, and neither his heart nor his conversation is in Heaven. Now to answer this description of character, it is not necessary, that he should be immersed in vice and in voluptuousness. He may recoil from these; and yet the world in some other of its varieties may have the entire mastery of his affections, and it be the alone theatre of his hopes and his interests and his wishes. What the earthly thing is which engrosses him, we may not be able to specify; and yet it may be very sure that earthly things are all which he minds, and that to the pleasure and the pursuit of them he is wholly given over. In the judgment of an earthborn morality he may not be at all criminal; and yet, in his tastes and tendencies and practical habits, he may be altogether carnal.

The next thing which requires to be understood, is what is meant by "sowing to the flesh." Let it be observed then, that the act of indulging its desires is one thing, and that the act of providing for the indulgence of them is another. When a man, on the impulse of sudden provocation, wreaks his resentful feelings upon the neighbour who has offended him, he is not at that time preparing for the indulgence of a carnal feeling; but actually indulging it. He is not at that time sowing, but reaping, such as it is, a harvest of gratification. But when, instead of tasting the sweets of revenge, he is employed in devising the measures of revenge, and taking counsel with the view of putting some scheme of it into operation—he is no doubt stimulated throughout this process, by the desire of retaliation; but it is not until the process has reached its accomplishment, that the desire is satisfied. It is thus that the sowing and the reaping may be distinguished from one another. We are busied with the one, when busied with the preparatory steps towards some consummation which we are aiming at; and we obtain the other in the act of consummation.

This distinction may serve to assist our judgment, in estimating the ungodliness of certain characters. The rambling voluptuary, who is carried along by every impulse, and all whose powers of mental discipline are so enfeebled that he has become the slave of every propensity, lives in the perpetual harvest of criminal gratification. If with him the voice of conscience be ever heard, amid the uproar of those passions which war against the soul, it only serves to darken his intervals of vice—when, on the assault of the next temptation, and the coming round of the next opportunity, it is again deafened and overborne as before, amid the mirth and the riot and the recklessness of profligate companionship. It is not to such a man that we should look as our best example of one who sows. We should rather look to another who is equally immersed in vice, but with more of steadfastness and self-command in the prosecution of it—who can bring intelligence and cool deliberation to bear upon its objects—who can patiently take his stand; and calculate upon his advantages; and, after the disguise and preparation of many months, can obtain the gratification of an unhallowed triumph over some victim of artifice. To the eye of the world, and with the general decency of his regulated habits, he may have a more seemly character than the unbridled debauchee. But if to disobey conscience, when scarcely heard amid the ravings of a tempest, be an humbler attainment in the school of impiety, than to stifle conscience in the hour of stillness and circumspection—if it be not so hardy a resistance to the voice of duty, when she calls unheeded along with a crowd of boisterous assailants, as when, with the cool and collected energies of a mind at leisure, she is firmly bidden to the door—then, though both these wretched aliens from God be surely posting to the place of condemnation, if there be degrees of punishment in hell, even as there are degrees of glory and enjoyment in heaven, we leave the question with yourselves, whether he in the present instance who has most been occupied in sowing, or he who has most been occupied in reaping, shall be made to inherit the deepest curse, or have the heaviest vengeance laid upon him.

But it is more useful still, to complete this distinction in the walks of reputable life; and for this purpose, we may notice a very frequent exhibition of it among the members of a prosperous family. A daughter, whose whole delight is in her

rapid transitions from one scene of expensive brilliancy to another—who sustains the delirium of her spirits among the visits and the excursions, and the parties of gaiety, which fashion has invented for the entertainment of its unthinking generations—who dissipates every care, and fills up every hour, with the raptures of hope or the raptures of enjoyment, among the frivolities and fascinations of her volatile society—She leads a life, than which nothing can be imagined more opposite to a life of preparation for the coming judgment or the coming eternity. Yet she reaps rather than sows. It lies with another to gather the money which purchaseth all things, and with her to taste the fruits of the purchase. It is the father who sows. It is he who sits in busy and brooding anxiety over his manifold speculations—wrinkled perhaps with care, and sobered by years into an utter distaste for the splendours and insignificancies of fashionable life. He provides the elements of all this expenditure, yet in the expenditure itself may have no enjoyment whatever. On all his habits there may be imprinted one unvaried character of regularity—punctual in hours, and temperate in enjoyments, and exemplary in all the mercantile virtues, and with no rambling desire whatever beyond the threshold of his counting-house, and engrossed with nothing so much as with the snug prosperity of its operations.

In the business of gain, there is often the ruffing of an occasional breeze; and the one who so employed is, to make use of a Bible expression, "sowing the wind." In the business of expenditure there is often the fury and agitation of a tempest; and the other who is so employed is, to make use of another Bible expression, "reaping the whirlwind." The habit of both is alike a habit of ungodliness. Giddy and unthinking in the latter; but certainly not more hopeless, than the settled ungodliness of the former—where system, and perseverance, and the deliberate application of the whole heart and the whole understanding, are given to the interests of the world—where every thought of seriousness about the soul, instead of being lost for a time in the whirl of intoxicating variety, is calmly and resolutely dispossessed by thoughts of equal seriousness about a provision for the perishable body—where wealth has become the chosen and adopted divinity of the whole life; and, in place of the God who endureth for ever, every care and every calculation are directed to a portion, frail as our earthly tabernacles, and fleeting as the vapour that soon passeth away.

But there is still another word that needs explanation. The term corruption in this passage is expressive, not of moral worthlessness as it frequently is, but of decay or expiration. The meaning of it here is in precise contrast to that of the term incorruption, in the place where it is said that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Where it stands in this verse, it is expressive, not of a moral property, but of a physical one. The corruption that is spoken of in the text, is simply opposed to the eternal life that is spoken of in the text. It is not here designed to affirm the wrongness of any carnal pursuit, but the instability of its objects. We are only translating the text into other language, when we say that all the harvest which is reaped by him who soweth unto the flesh cometh to an end—whereas he who soweth to the spirit will reap a harvest of pleasures which shall be for evermore. So that the lesson here is quite the same with that of the apostle John, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Now that we have finished these various explanations, the first lesson which we urge from the text, is the vanity of this world's ambition. We are elsewhere told in plainer language, not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world. To gratify our affection for these things, is to reap of the flesh, all which the flesh, even in its most extended sense, has to bestow upon us. To provide again for this gratification, is to sow unto the flesh. The man sows, when, under the impulse of a desire after earthly things, he plies and prosecutes his measures for the attainment of them. He reaps when he does attain. Were it not for a strange anomaly in the moral nature of man, this distinction could not have been better exemplified, than by him who first labours with the whole heart and seriousness

of his soul, after the money which purchaseth the objects of this world's gratification; and then gives himself up to the harvest of indulgence. But what mars and confounds the distinction in this instance is, that, when man devotes himself to the acquisition of that money which purchaseth all things, it is not always with the view of purchasing. Wealth is often prosecuted without that view. An independent charm is annexed to the bare possession of it. Apart altogether from its power of command over the enjoyments of life, it has become with many an object in itself of the most passionate and intense ambition. All the pleasure of the chase is keenly felt in the pursuit of it, and all the triumph of a victory as keenly felt in the attainment of it; and this without any regard to that harvest of subsequent enjoyment, into which it has the power of ushering its successful votaries. It is thus, that, although the mere shadow and representative of enjoyment, it has at length infatuated its worshippers into a higher relish for itself, than for all the enjoyments of which it is the minister—so that, instead of a handmaid to the gratification of our other appetites, itself has become with many the object of an appetite more domineering than them all; and wealth apart from all its uses and subserviencies, now stands to their imagination in the place of a mighty and dispensing sovereign, to whom they render the devotion and the drudgery of all their services.

In those cases, however, where wealth is the terminating object, there is still the process of sowing—even that process of diligence and of busy devisings, by which the schemes of this earthly ambition are carried on. Only the harvest, instead of consisting in any ulterior things which wealth can purchase, consists in the mere acquisition of the wealth itself. In the walks of merchandise, were we to look to the minds and the motives of its most aspiring candidates, would we often see that it was not what comes after the wealth, but the wealth itself which both set them agoing and keeps them agoing. They may be sowing, not unto the lust of the flesh, not unto the lust of the eye, not unto the pride of life, all of which are opposed to the love of the Father. But still they are sowing; and to that, too, the love of which is equally opposite to the love of the Father. They who are seeking treasure for themselves, instead of seeking to be rich towards God, are in fact sowing unto the flesh, for they are sowing unto that which terminates with the body—They are sowing unto that which is altogether corrupt—understanding by this term altogether transitory. They are sowing unto that on which death, in a few little years, will put its impressive mockery. They are rearing their chief good on a foundation that is perishable. They are labouring for one portion only, which will speedily be wrested from them by the gripe of a destroyer—who will leave them without a portion, and without an inheritance for ever.

They are labouring for a part in this world's substance, and in the possession of it, verily they have their reward. But, in regard to the substance which endureth, as for it they have never laboured, so it they never will acquire. They have sought to be arrayed in perishable glory, and perhaps will find a little hour of magnificence on earth, ere they bid their everlasting adieu to its infatuations. But that hour will soon come to its termination; and Death may leave all the possessions untouched, but he will lay his rude and resistless hand upon the possessor. The house may stand in castellated pride for many generations, and the domain may smile for ages in undiminished beauty; but in less, perhaps, than half a generation, death will shoot his unbidden way to the inner apartment, and, without spoiling the lord of his property, he will spoil the property of its lord. It is not his way to tear the parchments, and the rights of investiture from the hand of their proprietor; but he paralyzes and unlocks the hand, and they fall like useless and forgotten things away from it. It is thus that Death smiles in ghastly contempt on all human aggrandizement. He meddles not with the things that are occupied, but he lays hold of the occupier; and this to him is as entire a deprivation, as if he trampled all that belonged to him into powder. He does not seize upon the wealth, but he lays his arrest upon the owner. He forces away his body to the grave, where it moulders into dust; and, in turning the soul

out of its warm and well-loved tenement, he turns it adrift on the cheerless waste of a desolate and neglected Eternity.

We are not told here that it is wrong to sow unto the flesh. This may be, this is a doctrine of the Bible; but it is not the doctrine of this particular verse. It does not pronounce on the criminality of the pursuit—but just on the evanescence of its objects. It simply tells us, that the good attained by sowing unto the flesh is temporal; and to this the whole experience of man bears testimony. He cannot look upon general history, without perceiving the rapid movement of one generation after another. He cannot live long in the world, without perceiving the fall of acquaintances upon every side of him. He cannot have a circle of relatives around him, without the lesson of death being brought home to his feelings, by the touching incidents of his own domestic history. Should he still persist in associating either durability or magnitude with his earthly interests, —this may prove a moral or an intellectual derangement in himself; but it proves nothing against the affirmation, that, in sowing unto the flesh, he will of the flesh reap only corruption. As he grows older in years, he may grow more inveterate in delusion. As he draws towards the termination of his earthly existence, he may cling with more intense affection to its vanities. As the hour of his eternal separation from the world approaches, he may grow in the estimation of its value; and adhere more tenaciously to all its objects, and to all its interests. This proves him to be the child of infatuation; but against the truth of the Bible, it proves nothing. It may bespeak the virulence of some great spiritual disease, which hath overspread our species. It may demonstrate, that, in reference to a great and awfully momentous truth, we labour under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. But the truth itself remains unshaken; and on every individual who is born into the world, it will be most surely and most speedily realized.

The second lesson, founded on these explanations of our text, that we would propose, is the unprovidedness of all those men for eternity, whose affections are settled upon the world, and who possess not one wish or one practical interest beyond the limits of its sensible horizon. That, indeed, is a meagre theology which would look upon the outcasts of human society, as the only outcasts from Heaven; and which would represent the path that leadeth unto spiritual and everlasting life, to be so gentle and so accessible that few do miss it, instead of representing it as that arduous and narrow path, of which our Saviour hath said that there be few who find it. It is a woeful delusion, and we fear the undoing of many an immortal spirit, that nought will shut us out of Paradise, but such literal and flagrant offences against the law of rectitude, as would degrade us beneath the average character of those decent and respectable and neighbour-like families, by whom we are encompassed; and that if we but acquit ourselves with tolerable fairness upon earth, we are fit for being translated when we die, among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Now, it is true, that we may stand exempted from all gross and outrageous delinquency. We may fulfil all the honesties of social intercourse. We may even have more than the average share of its humanities. The cordialities of domestic affection may, by the mechanism of our sentient nature, flow through our bosoms, in a stream as warm and as kindly as does the blood that circulates through our veins. And to many of the graces of private life, there may be added the activities of public life and of patriotism—the pulse of high and honourable feeling—the blush of unviolated delicacy—the ingenuousness of nature's truth—the sensibilities of nature's tenderness. And withal, there may be a taste most finely and feelingly alive, if not to those spiritual beauties which irradiate the character of the Godhead, at least to those sensible beauties wherewith the face of our goodly creation hath been decked so profusely by his hand; and there may be science, and imagination, and towering intellect, and sublime thoughts of truth and of the universe, and all the virtues which the happiest constitution can engender, and all the philosophy which loftiest genius can achieve.

Now we would put it to your own sense and experience of our common nature, if you think it impossible, that a man so gifted shall breathe the element

of irreligion; that, from morning to night, the God, amid the glories of whose workmanship he all the day rejoices, shall be to him like an unknown or a forgotten thing; that satisfied, and in full occupation with the business of the peopled region in which he dwells, he should cast not one look beyond the death to which his footsteps are carrying him, should heave not one aspiration through the illuminated concave that is above his head; and that thus the Being, who hath graced and invested humanity with all that so proudly or so pleasingly adorns it, should be habitually and wholly disregarded by him, whom the hand of the Almighty Sovereign hath called forth, and exalted into the noblest of its specimens. And if indeed a creature so accomplished, might nevertheless live and die in ungodliness, then let us not be deceived into fatal security, by the virtues of an average and every-day world. They one and all of them may consist with alienation from God; and utter strangers to the spirit, or to the things of that spiritual economy which He has instituted, they may, throughout all their rounds of business or companionship or pleasure, be sowing only unto the flesh, and making this earth, this perishable earth, the scene of all their joys and of all their expectations. We charge them not with crime—yet, if so immersed in earthliness as to have lost all practical sensibility to God, we must refuse their Christianity. The whole drift and tendency of their affections are to the things which are beneath. The effort, the anxiety, the perpetual longing of their hearts, are all toward the accommodations and the interests of time. They are carnally minded, which is death. They sow unto the flesh, and of the flesh they shall reap corruption.

And this is the consummation of their present being, not because they have lived either in profane or in profligate wickedness, but simply because they have lived without God—because they have made earth their resting-place; and, altogether pleased with what is perishable, the general habit of their souls has marked them to be citizens of earth and not of heaven—with this world as the alone repository of their interests and hopes, without one pilgrim sigh, and far less one pilgrim step, towards the land of Eternity. Were you to put it to their choice, whether, if all was prosperous here, it was not here that they would like to live for ever—it might bring the state of their affections to the test, and decide the question of their being carnal or spiritual men. Let the proposal be made, that, with health and fortune and friendship, and the bloom of perpetual youth, and the blessings of joyous companionship, and an affectionate family, there should withal be the elixir of immortality poured into your cup; and on the face of this goodly world, so full of sweets and of sunshine, you should be permitted to expatiate for ever. Tell me, if, on these terms, you would not cleave with fondest tenacity to your present habitation; and be willing to live all recklessly as heretofore of the God that upholds you? Would you not be glad to take everlasting leave of your Maker; and, could you only be spared the encounter of that hideous death which disembodies the soul and conveys it to the land of spectres, would you not consent far rather to sojourn and to spend your eternity in this more congenial land? In other words, would you not prefer that God and you should be everlastingly quit of each other—rather than be wrested from your tenements of clay; and deprived of your footing on that territory, where alone those earthly enjoyments are to be found, that are suited to your earthly nature? Tell me if you could not forego even heaven and all its psalmody to be fairly let alone; and, for the sake of a lasting and undisturbed inheritance in this smiling world, would you not agree that God should withdraw Himself in eternal oblivion from your thoughts, and that you should be eternal outcasts from God's spiritual family?

You may plead in apology, that, in choosing for earth rather than heaven, you just make the universal choice of nature; but it only proves the truth of this great Bible position—that Nature is in a state of exile from God—and that there is indeed a wide disruption between the planet on which we dwell, and the rest of God's unfallen creation. It only proves that you are yet of the flesh and not of the spirit; and that you have not made that mighty transition by which the affections are carried upward from the

dust of this perishable world, to that upper sanctuary where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and where God sitteth on a throne that is at once a throne of grace and of righteousness. Be assured if so, that you are not in a state which it will do to die in. There will be no such earth as the one that we inhabit—after the present economy is dissolved; and succeeded by a heaven where all is sacredness and seraphic ecstasy, and a hell where all is the defiance and the despe ation of rooted, resolved, and implacable ungodliness. Such a middle region as the one we at present occupy, where the creature enjoys himself amid the gifts, and cares not for the giver, cannot long be tolerated. It is an anomaly on the face of creation, and will as such be swept away. And meanwhile the processes of our text are those which connect your doings here, with one or other of the two destinies hereafter. "If you sow unto the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. If you sow unto the spirit you will of the spirit reap life everlasting."

We have hitherto used the term corruption in the sense it has in the text—that is the property of being perishable and so transitory; and, ere we conclude in a few words with the common sense of the term as denoting the moral property of being criminal or faulty, let us just make one remark which at present we cannot afford to expatiate on. It is this—that the man who soweth unto the flesh, or in other words labours to secure some earthly enjoyment, that he should reap only corruption, or reap only that which at length passes away from him and ceases any longer to be—why this is in perfect keeping with all the analogies of nature and human life. It is the proper result of the course on which he hath entered. It is in conformity with all that takes place in other paths of activity and exertion—where it is found that as is the aim so is the accomplishment. The schoolboy seeks for amusement, and he finds it—he gets the one thing his heart is set upon, but not another thing—he gets not the acquisition of a fortune for example. The daughter of many graces and many accomplishments seeks for distinction in the circle of fashion, and that may be realised; but you would never look, for the result of such an aim or such an enterprise, to distinction in the circle of politics. The citizen looks forward in perspective, and labours in the walk of busy merchandise, for the sum which he thinks will satiate the ambition of his nature—this he may reach, but not surely an eminence of literary fame. And so of every other landing-place to every other path of exertion.—As is the seeking so is the finding. The man of business does not get a name in philosophy. The man of letters does not get to the pinnacle of affluence. The man of victory in war, does not obtain the glory which is achieved by the man of discovery in science. And so, to use a designation comprehensive of them all, the man of the world realises some one or other of the world's objects; but he does not realise the things or the interests of heaven. Verily he hath his reward. He gets what he sought for, and has no right to complain if he do not get what he never sought for. He reaches the appropriate termination of his path.—Time and Eternity are both set before him; he made choice of time, and he hath sped accordingly. But his eternity is a blank; and it were in violation of all the analogies of human experience if it were otherwise. It is thus, if we had time to illustrate the lesson a little farther, that a flood of light may be thrown upon the position that—not because a man's actions are criminal, but simply because his affections are earthly—not because in the deeds of his hand there has been ought of the violent but because in the desires of his heart there has been nought of the spiritual—not because he hath done that which should disgrace him in this world of sinners which is soon to pass away, but simply because he hath neither sought after a place nor laboured in the work of preparation for that world of saints which is to remain in brightness for ever.—On these grounds alone, and without the imputation of any notorious delinquency at all, there is many a most respectable citizen, who, viewed in reference to his capacity as an immortal creature, lives all his days in a state of utter negation and nakedness; and who, when overtaken by death, will find himself on the margin of an unprovided eternity, with nought in its mighty and unexplored

vastness before him but the dark imagery of desolation and despair.

But the final issue of such a life as he hath spent in the world, is something additional to a mere shortness from heaven. There is further included in it the positive wretchedness of hell: And ere the reason and the conscience can be reconciled to such a consummation as this, it is not enough to make out that he has been all along sowing to that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is transitory; but that further, he is chargeable with that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is morally reprehensible and wrong. The great difficulty of a gospel minister lies in convincing of this, our amiable and virtuous but withal worldly men. Our chief encounter in society, is with a meagre and superficial imagination of guilt. Men know not what they have done, that should land them in so frightful a consummation, as the hell of the New Testament. They understand not how it is, that any sin of theirs should have lighted up those fires which are to burn everlastingly. They will admit that they have failings; but surely nothing commensurate to a vengeance so relentless and so interminable as this. There may be some desperadoes in wickedness—there may be a few of stouter and more stubborn hardihood than all their fellows—there may be men of fiend-like atrocity, whom the children of this world so little resemble, that the world at large would shudder at them—these may be the befitting inmates of that dire and dreadful Pandæmonium, where the spirits of the accursed dwell. But surely the kind and the courteous and the companionable men of our own daily walk and our own familiar neighbourhood, with whom we exchange the visits of hospitality and the smiles of benignity and good will—you would not assimilate their guilt, with that of the daring outcast, who passes through life in utter recklessness of all its duties and of all its decencies. This cause of the peace which men feel about their eternal prospects is distinct from the former. It is a juridical principle that is quite current among men, and lends a mighty reinforcement to the apathy of Nature. They are at peace, because they do not see that theirs is at all a guilt so grievous as to bring down upon it the burden of a grievous condemnation—and so a peace which we fear is no peace. There is indeed in all this a very complete illusion. For a man to be execrated as a monster in society, he must have outraged the duties of that relation in which he stands to his fellow-men. Now of all these he may have acquitted himself in a very tolerable way; and yet there is another and a distinct relation, to which also belong peculiar duties of its own, and which he may have altogether neglected—we mean the relation in which he stands, not to the beings of his own species, but to the Being who made him. He may have discharged himself of all that he owes to his fellows upon earth, and yet have been utterly unmindful of what he owes to God in heaven. He may have felt the force of all those moral and sympathetic affections, which bind men together into a community below—and yet felt no attraction whatever to Him who is the great Parent and Preserver of the human family. There might be many a close and kindly reciprocation of mutual esteem, and mutual tenderness, and all the virtues of good neighbourhood, among ourselves; and yet the whole of this terrestrial society, be in a state of utter disruption from Him who is at once the source and the centre of the created Universe. It is just as if a stray planet might retain its cohesion, and its chemistry, and all those laws of motion and plastic influences which would continue to uphold many of the processes of our present terrestrial physics; but which loosed from its gravitation to the sun would drift waywardly in space, and become an outcast from the harmonies of the great mundane system. Now this is precisely what the Bible affirms of the spiritual world. The men of this planet have broken off their affinity to God. They retain many of their wonted affinities for each other; but they have made disruption and a wide and general departure from God. They have yet a terrestrial ethics with the graces and moralities of which some are so richly adorned, as to shine in beauteous lustre before the eye of their fellows; while others even in reference to these earth-born virtues, are so marred and mutilated, that they are looked upon by all as

he objects of a revolting deformity. Of the great principle of the celestial Ethics, both may at the same time be alike destitute. It is experimentally true, that the man of compassion and the man of cruelty, with hearts so differently affected by the sight of distress, may be in the same state of practical indifference towards God. It is the spirit of a sound philosophy, as well as of a sound faith, to affirm that Humanity, with all her complexional varieties of character between one specimen and another, may be throughout impregnated with the deep spirit of ungodliness.

This is the representation of that scripture which speaketh to us from heaven; and to this, we believe, that every enlightened conscience upon earth will re-echo. It charges not injustice upon all. It charges not gross and abominable licentiousness upon all. It charges not open or scandalous profaneness upon all. But it charges ungodliness upon all. When brought to the bar of civil or criminal law, when brought to the bar of public opinion, when brought to the bar of social or conventional morality amongst men, you may be most fully and honourably acquitted. Yet when brought to the bar of a higher jurisprudence, there may be laid, and most rightfully laid upon you, the burden of an overwhelming condemnation. It is then, and then only that ungodliness stands forth as an article of the indictment against you. It is then that the Being who made you takes up His own cause, and appears in support of his own controversy. It is then that question is made, not of the claims which men have upon you, but of those peculiar and transcendental claims which God has upon you. It is then that you are met with the question—"What have you done unto God?" In reference to the moralities of your human companionship below, there is perhaps not one earthly tribunal before which you might not stand in the attitude of proud integrity. In reference to that transcendental morality, which relates the thing that is formed to Him who hath formed it—there is the overthrow of every pretension, and man's boasted righteousness melteth utterly away.

Now it is man's blindness to this principle, which forms one main ingredient of the false and the fatal peace that is so general in our world. There is blindness to the jurisprudence of the upper sanctuary, as well as blindness to the futurities of the unseen state. The two together have the effect of a most deadly opiate; nor are we to wonder if our species have been charmed thereby, into so profound a spiritual lethargy.—And thus it is, that though the creatures of a fleeting and fantastic day, we tread on earth with as assured footsteps, as if, instead of its shortlived tenants we were to be everlastingly its lords. And the laugh, and the song, and the festive gaiety, and the busy schemes of earthliness, all speak a generation fast locked in the insensibility of spiritual death. Nor do the terrors of the grave shake this tranquillity—nor do the still more awful terrors of the judgment-seat. That day of man's dissolution which is so palpably at hand, and which sends before it so many intimations, fails to disturb him. That day of the world's dissolution, when the trumpet shall be sounded, and the men of all generations shall awake to the high reckonings of eternity, and this earth and these Heavens shall be involved in the ruins of one mighty conflagration, and the wrath that now is suspended in this season of offered mercy shall at length break forth into open manifestation on all the sons and daughters of ungodliness—this day, which when it cometh, will absorb every heart in one fearful and overwhelming interest—now that it only is to come, and is seen through the imagined vista of many successive centuries, has no more effect than a dream of poetry. And, whether from the dimness of nature's sight to all the futurities of the spiritual world, or from its slender apprehension of that guilt which in the sacred eye of heaven is so enormous—certain it is, that men can travel onward both to the death and to the judgment, and say peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The awfulness of the first of these events, even death, bears in it experimental proof to God's intolerance of sin. If He indeed felt our guilt, as little as we feel our danger—if His displeasure were a thing as slight and as gentle as our alarm—why so dreadful a visitation upon

our species as death?—a thing unknown to angels, and from which the whole of sentient nature shrinks as at the approach of most unnatural violence. If God be as much at peace with the world, as the world is at peaceful complacency with itself—why keep up so hard and so hostile a dispensation against it?—or if sin be of as trivial account in the estimation of Heaven, as it is in the estimation of human society—how should it have brought down such a vengeance upon earth, as to have smitten it with a plague of mortality throughout all its borders; and swept off to the hideousness of the grave, all the life and beauty and intelligence of its successive generations. That surely is no trifle, which has turned this bright and blooming world into a vast sepulchral abode for the men of all ages. Its moaning death-beds, and its weeping families, and its marred and broken companionships—these are all emphatic testimonies of God's hatred of moral evil; for that sin brought all this calamity upon the world, is a principle announced to us in scripture—and it is the only principle which resolves to us the mystery of death. And when the same scripture announces that after death cometh the judgment—O let us not give in to the treacherous imagination; that He who hath made such fell exhibition of severity in the one, will in the other but manifest and indulge his tenderness. But let us be very sure, that, as death is to every unrepentant sinner but the beginning of his sorrows, so judgment will be to him as a second death.

We shall be happy, if, as the fruit of these observations, we can convince any of you, that, apart from crime, apart from literal transgressions of the divine law, there may be the utmost spiritual destitution in the mere earthliness of our affections—the most entire unfitness for heaven above, simply because our heart's delight and desire are set upon the world that is below—an eternity wholly unprovided, because the pleasures and the provision of time are all that we seek and all that we care for. There is a juridical principle, that nothing will condemn us at the bar of our final reckoning, but crime; and then that mere carnality, in the general sense of the word, is no crime. Now it is not a crime in the eye of human jurisprudence; but in the eye of the divine jurisprudence it is the most enormous of all. It is the preference of the creature to the Creator, and will terminate in the gloom of everlasting deprivation and despair, after that Creation, in its present power to engage and to gratify, shall have passed away, and we shall have to do with the rebuke and the resentment of Creation's Lord who endureth for ever. O be persuaded, then, of your need of a gospel; and give up from this time forward your indifference and contempt for it. Be assured that the great apparatus of a Mediator, and a Sacrifice, and a risen High Priest, and an Intercession to reconcile, and a Spirit to sanctify—be assured that all this was not uncalled for: and now seek unto Him who is able to change you from the carnal to the spiritual, to crucify those affections which have their objects on earth and are now so vigorously alive, and to quicken within you such new affections as have their objects in Heaven, and without which heaven can never be the place of our abode, and just because it cannot be the place of our enjoyment.

SERMON XIV.

On the Knowledge of Christ and Him crucified.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor. ii. 2.

You are aware that Christian truth consists, not of one article, but of many articles; that in the treasury of sacred wisdom, there are things both new and old, and all of which ought to be brought forth and unfolded to the view of those who are attending the lessons of preparation for eternity; that just as in a landscape of nature, so it is not one single object which either by its magnitude occupies the whole of the spiritual landscape, or even by the lustre of its overbearing worth and importance ought to engross our exclusive regards to it. There is not one object in the whole field of revelation, which should so fasten and concentrate our observation upon it, as to detach us from all the others that stand out there in the visible exhibition; nor one of such exceeding size and prominency, as should cause us to overlook the variety of lesser objects that are strewed around its pedestal. But still as you may have often noticed on some scene or representation of visible beauty, that, all crowded though it be with traits of loveliness, there is some one figure in the groupe bearing itself so nobly and so commandingly over the rest, as to be ever drawing the eye and the admiration of the spectator towards it—so, among all the diversities which the Bible places before the spiritual eye, may there be one truth of such eclipsing superiority over all the others, as that ever present, or at least of constant recurrence to the thoughts, it may be the one on which a Christian heart shall dwell with perpetual fondness, and be oftenest absorded in the contemplation of it. Paul in the text points to such a truth; and if he do not just tell us that it ought to monopolise the regards of every disciple, he at least tells us of its lofty and superlative claims upon them. It is well that in this matter we have the guidance of apostolical taste and apostolical discernment; nor can we do better than look to that very quarter where this gifted man of inspiration is so fixedly looking, when he says I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

While so employed, we should like chiefly to confine your attention to the specification which the apostle attaches to our Saviour, when he passes from the mention of Christ in the general to the mention of Him crucified; and to demonstrate the title which this object so specialised has on the supreme attention of Christians. And it will appear in the course of our observations, that, though Christ crucified should be the supreme, He is not the sole object of our regard; and that, so far from the dignity of the object being reduced in consequence, it is in fact enhanced when thus translated from a place of solitude to a place of supremacy.

The first title that Christ crucified hath upon our attention is, that by the knowledge of this we are provided against the most urgent and appalling calamity which hangs over our species. If we abide in ignorance herein, the wrath of God abideth upon us. Let the apathy of man to his real condition be what it may—this may lighten for a time his fears, but it does not lighten the actual burden of his curse and his condemnation. He may have been seized by the spirit of deep slumber; but he only sleeps on the eve of a coming storm. Such may be the profoundness of his spiritual lethargy, that the denunciations of vengeance are unheard; and the storehouse of that vengeance in heaven, even the breast of the offended Godhead, in which are treasured up the remembrance of all His wrongs, and His unalterable purposes of redress and vindication—this may lie hid in deep oblivion from his eye; and just because

the danger is wholly unfelt, the deliverance therefrom may be wholly unprized. He may be alike reckless of sin and of the Saviour; and because the one falls lightly upon his conscience, the other may be of light esteem in his computation. But it is not his blindness that can either change, or can annihilate, the eternal relationships by which he is surrounded. He is within the domain of an eternal government, beyond which he cannot transport himself. He is under the authority of a strict and unchangeable law, from which he cannot escape. There is a throne in heaven, and a God sitting upon that throne, from the rebuke of whose countenance he cannot flee away—by whom the meanest of His accountable family cannot be overlooked—and all those dealings with every creature whom He has formed, will serve to illustrate the force and the purity and the rectitude of a high moral administration. It is in the power of man to shut his eyes and so extinguish his preception of the truth: but he cannot extinguish the truth itself.

These are the real, and stable, and substantial conditions of his being, and he cannot obliterate them. He hath broken a commandment, the awful sanctions of which were set forth in the hearing of men and of angels; and in their sight they must be executed. There is a solemn day that will speedily overtake us all, when we shall be reckoned with for our ungodliness—when we shall be charged with having lived out our time in the world, regardlessly of Him who made the world—when the heart shall be taken cognisance of for all its stray affections from Him to whom it owed supreme allegiance—when the question shall be put, what hast thou done unto God; and the mighty requirement of doing all things to His glory shall be set up, as the only standard of reference by which to try all our duties and all our deviations. All this we may cancel for a time from our own recollection; but we cannot cancel it from the book of God's remembrance—nor can we cancel it from those certainties which shall be fulfilled, on the person of every sinner who dies an outcast from reconciliation. Truth will have its way upon him. The jealousies of an incensed God will burst forth into an open discharge; and all the attribu of a nature that is holy and unchangea must then stand out in their own pro demonstration. Among the frivolities a short-lived day, we may have crad our souls into unconcern; and this m disguise from us, but it cannot destroy itself, the reality of things. The trea ery of this world's delusions, can ne belie the truth of heaven's declaratio And still it remaineth, amid all the u heedings of nature's incredulity and n ture's blindness—that there must be so awful adjustment between God as t insulted Sovereign, and man as the reb who hath defied and disobeyed Him.

The direct, and, if one may so ter it, the natural way of bringing about th adjustment, were by the infliction of t threatened penalty on those who had i curred it—precisely as the difference b tween a creditor and a debtor is adjuste by enforcing payment. It is thus th God might have eased Him of his adve saries, and swept away from the face o His creation that guilt which had d formed it; and made full demonstratio of His justice and His power, by liftin up the red arm of an avenger over th hosts of the rebellious; and as it we cleared out from the domain of purit the loathsome and offensive spectacle o sin, by dooming all who were tainte with it to an accursed territory, whe they should be for ever apart from th children of His own kingdom. And thi is the very doom that lies on humanity— the very curse that adheres to each ind vidual member of it—the very sentenc which, whether you tremble under it o not, is written against you in the boo of condemnation. And could we onl pursue each conscience, with the appre hension of this, as with an arrow stickin fast; and make known to its owner, hov unrelenting the law of God is, and hov impossible it were for Him, by any com promise of dignity or of truth, to conniv at transgression, or look to sin withou the full attestation of His righteous ab horrence—then might every soul, awak to the dread reality of its own condition above all other knowledge, hold th knowledge of a Saviour to be indeed th most precious.

And it is through a Saviour, that th adjustment between the Lawgiver an

the sinner has been made. The tidings of this adjustment form the very essence of the gospel. The debt is not exacted from the principal, because paid by a surety. The penalty is not laid on the transgressor, because laid on a substitute. To remove the offence of a dishonoured law, there needeth not now that the offender shall be borne away to a place of exile or imprisonment—for by the price of a Redeemer's blood hath the law been magnified; and, grander exhibition far of its authority than that the sinner should die, is that he should pass under the covert of His mediatorship who gave himself up a nobler sacrifice. It is this which constitutes the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified. There was a need be, that the wrath of God should be discharged; and it has been discharged on the head of this illustrious sufferer. There was a need be, that if ever mercy should go forth from heaven upon our world, it should wear upon its forehead the impress of the truth and justice and holiness of heaven; and that these perfections of Him who dwelleth there should so appear in vindicated majesty, as that glory to God in the highest might meet and be in harmony with peace on earth and goodwill to the children of men: And nowhere but in the cross of Christ hath the world beheld so very peculiar a manifestation of the Godhead. There was a need be, that, if ever again the sinner could be admitted into the august presence of Him whom he had displeased, the way of readmittance should be guarded by such a ceremonial, as would announce to him in solemn and emphatic characters the evil of sin; and for this purpose, a way has been opened, through the rent vail of a Saviour's flesh, and been consecrated by the blood of a divine atonement. And what can more concern you, than to know this path of recall from your eternal banishment? What more momentous to us, than that there has been found out another way for the descending vengeance of heaven, than that it should fall on our guilty and devoted heads? What is there on the wide universe in which we are placed, that should come more urgently home to our personal interests and fears, than when told of that mighty and mysterious transference, by which the whole burden of this tremendous curse has been made to pass away from us; and we are again ushered back into the friendship of heaven's family?

And let us have you all to understand, that this is not the general exposition of an argument, in which you have no concern, and to which you may look from a distance with an eye of cold and intellectual speculation. There is none here present, on whom it does not bear with the specific import of one who is pointedly and individually addrest by it. The message of the gospel is something more than a voice, which merely reports to all what is good that all may hear of it. It is in fact the bearer of what is good, and brings the good nigh unto each that each may lay hold of it. There is in it no doubt the testimony of a great deliverance for sinners; but this testimony is just as good as an offer to all who are within reach of the sound of it—for there is a way of so receiving the testimony, as that the deliverance of which it speaks shall be received along with it, and it thus be fastened on by an act of appropriation. And the way in which you have to receive it, is simply to receive it with credit. Put faith in it, and you will have in your own person the full experience of its faithfulness. It is your trust in this gospel salvation, which constitutes your acceptance of it. It is on the stepping-stone of belief in the record, that you pass from death unto life. This is the one and only turning point of your reconciliation; and did we know how to frame the intimation, so as to bring it more plainly and more persuasively to your doors, we should labour to assure you of this, that the more firm your reliance on the blood of the great propitiation, the more certain is your possession of all it hath wrought and of all it hath purchased for you.

Let the sinner then be fairly arrested by a sense of danger—let his conscience be up in alarm because of the coming judgment; and truth with its penetrating beams make known to him that he is in the hands of an angry God—let him once be overtaken by that fearfulness, which, under a just view of his exposed and guilty condition, should sieze upon his soul; and, shooting his anticipations across that barrier of death to which he

is so rapidly approaching, let the eternity beyond it be peopled to the eye of his mind with the appalling imagery of vengeance and despair—O how fondly would he desire, and how highly would he appreciate the tidings of Christ crucified; and even join the apostle in saying, that nothing else than this he desired to know, because nothing but this could bring him relief from the terrors by which he was occupied. Wretched, and wearied out with attempts to find the door of escape, would he hail with rapture that outlet from the penalties of the law, which has been opened up by the expiatory death made known to us in the gospel; and when he sees in the provisions of its wondrous economy, how by the noblest of victims there had been rendered to the justice of God the noblest of vindications—how it must rejoice him to find that the Divinity might at once be glorified and he himself be safe.

But of what avail it may be thought, is the doctrine of Christ crucified, when there is no such vivacity of alarm—when people immersed in wordliness have no care or concern for any thing beyond it—when these terrors are all unfelt, and the tidings of deliverance are therefore all unheeded—and the medicine is in no demand, just because the disease has excited no apprehension? This is very much the general condition of men in society. They are in peace already, and therefore need nothing to pacify them. Christ has been called the anchor of the soul; but ere the soul go in quest of an anchor must it not first be thrown into stormy agitation? And must there not be revealed to the spiritual eye the vengeance that lies upon guilt, ere it can discern or look with fond complacency on the worth of the offered atonement?

Now it is very true, that, were we to describe the religious state of the great majority of our species, we should say that the danger on the one hand and the deliverance on the other are alike unseen by them—that if they have no joy in the pardon of the gospel, they have as little consternation in the threats of the law—and that, profoundly asleep unto both, they live without delight in Christ as their Saviour, and without dread of God as their Judge.

And thus it has been a most natural imagination among Christian writers, that, ere men will seek to know Christ crucified, they must be made to know themselves as liable to the punishment that he hath borne—that they must first be awakened to a sight of the enemy who pursues them, ere they will flee to that place of refuge where they are in safety from his power—that a sense of guilt must take the precedency in their hearts, of any anxious longing after absolution from it—and that each must feel with pungency he is a great siuner, ere he can feel the preciousness of Christ as a great Saviour.

Of what use then, may it be thought, is it to preach Christ to a listless and lethargic auditory? Paul, it is true, said that he determined to know nothing else among his hearers—but is not one thing at least indispensable to be previously known, ere the excellency of the knowledge of Christ can be at all appreciated? Must not the people who are addrest with the offer of salvation, be convinced of sin, ere salvation can be at all dear to them?

Let us attempt to state in a few words, how we conceive that this matter practically stands. And first we think, that we must have the testimony of many consciences when we say, that there is not much of grief, there is not much of sensibility, there is not any very pungent or penetrating conviction of sin in your hearts—nothing we fear that amounts to a state of spiritual distress or spiritual restlessness—and that, bating a few week-day forms and a few sabbath observations, the successive months and years of your existence in this world pass tolerably away, without any thing being either very sensibly felt, or very strenuously done by you, for the interest of your eternity.

Now it is not by the very same footsteps, that all are led from their present state of death in trespasses and sins, to the state of being spiritually alive. Could we in the first instance disturb them out of their security—could we lead them to see that gulph of destruction, which lieth at the end of the broad way, crowded as it is by a multitude as heedless as themselves—could the frown of an incensed lawgiver be made manifest to their souls,

and they be told to their own apprehension that by nature they are undone—this were a condition which some have realized; and weary and heavy laden under a sense of its terrors, have at length heard the invitation to rest, and to their happiness have found it. The terrors of the law have shut them up unto the faith of the gospel; and they have arrived at peace, through a labyrinth of many disquietudes. It was by an avenue through the dark forebodings of guilt, that they at length reached a landing place among the comforts and promises of the gospel; and, as we often read in the history of conversions—the transition of their hearts, from the false peace of nature to the true peace of Christianity, was through a long intermediate passage of many doubts and many agitations.

Now though this is a frequent way of passing out of darkness into marvellous light, it is not the only way. We would not ply you exclusively with the threatenings of the law—till we judged the alarm to be enough lively, and the affliction for sin to be enough deep and sorrowful, and the sense of danger and of helplessness to be enough overwhelming, and the whole discipline of legal remorse and legal apprehensions to be enough lengthened out—for then plying you with the overtures of reconciliation, through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We should rather incline to mix both at the outset of our ministrations; and, alike removed though many of you may be from the fears of guilt and the consolations of grace, yet, within the compass of single breathing, should we like to tell that while by the one all has been lost, by the other all has been regained for you.

And our reason for this, will perhaps recommend itself to your own experience. No man likes to open his eyes to the spectacle which gives him pain; and, should he have the power, he would rather turn him away from it. Could he, by the putting forth of his own volitions, drown the remembrance of that which hurts or which disquiets him—then the temptation will be felt to a little more sleep and a little more slumber. He will bid off the unwelcome intruder if he can; and that for the sake of a peaceful or a pleasing oblivion from all that might harrow up his soul—just as the mariners of a sinking vessel, or the adventurer on a sea of commercial speculation who finds that his coming bankruptcy is inevitable, have been known to take an opiate in mad intoxication from the agonising sense of the ruin which impended over them.

Now it is just so with the human mind in reference to eternity, and to Him who has the disposal of it. Let a demonstration be offered in the characters of terror; and man's first and natural movement would be to make his escape from it. He will keep aloof from a spectacle that disturbs him; and by the very distance at which he stands from it, may protect his conscience from all violent or distressful agitation. In these circumstances, let the severities of the law be offered and nothing else, and the man may seek after any outlet rather than brave a contemplation so appalling. He may never, through his whole life long, have experience of the deeper agonies of horror or remorse—and, just because of the wilful and resolute distance at which he keeps himself from the whole contemplation, he, from the place he occupies, may view religion as a dull and a comfortless system; and while perhaps he acquits himself of its outward decencies, he will take care if he can help it not to drink in its terrors. And many are his facilities for keeping it at abeyance, and for postponing all settlement of the question to a more convenient season—when like to tremble as Felix of old, under the power of its denunciations. How easy it were in the glee of merry companionship, to drown the urgencies of the last menacing sermon. How manifold are the varieties of business or amusement, in whose whirl he can dissipate every rising impression of fear or of seriousness in his bosom. With what effect can he lull the alarms of his inward monitor, by any of the thousand soporifics, which sense and time and the world administer to carnality. And then how possible it is for a man to throw himself into the arms of forgetfulness, and to cradle his soul in the repose of a deep and determined insensibility. The preaching of the law, though in all the thunders of its violated majesty, may have no more power to shake the sinner out of his spiritual lethargies, than the

louder fury of the storm has to recall to duty the inebriated mariner. The manifestation of a coming vengeance to the one, may have just the effect that the manifestation of a coming shipwreck has upon the other. It may drive both to their expedients of stupefaction; and the excess of an abandoned crew on the eve of their engulphment, is but the counterpart to the insanity of those, who, in this world's oblivious draughts, hush all sense of their dark and fathomless eternity.

The way to rally this desperado crew were, not that the tempest should blow more fiercely, but to cause the signal be heard of relief and safety at hand; and then would they put forth all their strenuousness to make for it. And the way to summon back again from his plunge of reckless dissipation, the merchant who had lost all hope of his affairs, were not to astound him with the tidings of another disaster—but to come forth with such a gift or offer of suretyship, as might cover all his deficiencies, and make credit and independence again to smile upon his labours. And so it is with the voyagers of our great earthly pilgrimage; and so it is with those who are debtors to do the whole law, and who are shortly to be brought to the bar of heaven's reckoning. Quite in vain to tell them of the coming storm, if this be all. Quite in vain to threaten these irrecoverable defaulters with the eternal imprisonment that awaits them, if they have no other remedy than mad and insensate carelessness against the horrors of despair. The only way to recall them to the path and the attitude of immortal creatures, is to clear away that thick and awful darkness, which before sat on the prospects of their immortality. There is no other way of rescuing them from the state of being without God, but by rescuing them from the state of being without hope in the world. If you want to move them out of their lethargy, you must follow up the demonstration of their sin, by the demonstration of the Saviour who died for it. It is this which gives such effect to the preaching of the gospel; and turns its peace, and its invitation, and its kindness, into the elements of a ministry still more awakening, than any which has nought but the threats and the terrors of legality to sustain it. And you who have hitherto withstood all that is tremendous in the thoughts of the fierceness of Almighty God—some even of you may be drawn to do Him homage, when you look to the embassy of love that He sent by His Son into the world; and, more especially, when you see that the great barrier of separation is now taken down, and that a high way of conversion has been opened for you all through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

SERMON XV.

Danger of neglecting the Gospel.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."—HEBREWS ii. 3.

WE recently observed, in discoursing on the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of Him crucified, that some were visited with an alarming sense of danger, and were long kept in a state of pain and of perplexity, and had much of disquietude upon their spirits—ere they found their way to a place of rest, or a place of enlargement. They had to describe a course of dark and strong agitation among the terrors of the law, ere they arrived at their secure haven among the comforts of the gospel. And manifold is the recorded experience of those, on whose desolate hearts the light of the offered reconciliation never beamed—till they had been preyed upon for months and years, by the remorse of a coming guilt, by the dread of a coming vengeance.

But we further observed, that, though this was frequent in the history of conversions, it was far from universal. And why should it? There is a message of

pardon from heaven at our door; and its very first demand upon us, is that we should give credit thereto. If any one claim upon us be preferable to another, surely it is the claim of Him who cannot lie, that we shall believe in His testimony. Are we to hold the truth of God at abeyance, aye and until we have walked some round of mental discipline and experience, that may liken the history of our translation from darkness unto light, to that of some fellow-mortal who has gone before us? Are we to postpone our faith in an actual report, brought to us from the upper sanctuary, till we have brought the frame of our spirits to its right adjustment, by having travelled over a course of certain feelings and certain fluctuations? Meanwhile let us recollect, that an embassy from Heaven is waiting to be heard; that it is charged with the tidings of an atonement for sin wherewith God is satisfied, if we are but satisfied; that we lie under a peremptory invitation to look unto Christ and be saved; and that overtures of peace and of forgiveness are before us, of which we are expressly bidden to entertain and to close with them.

This is a light, in which the gospel hath dawned upon some at the very outset of their religious earnestness; and no sooner did it so shine upon them than they rejoiced. The earliest morning of their Christianity arose in gladness—so that they were scarcely sensible of any tempestuous passage midway, from the peace of nature to the peace of the gospel. The call to believe, they felt to be imperative; and coming as it did with what they were made to recognise as a voice of authority, it permitted not the lapse of a single day, between the conviction that they were great sinners, and the consolation that Christ was a great Saviour. They felt that they had no right to suspend their assurance in the truth of what God said, till they had completed a given period of sighing and of sorrowing, because of their unworthiness. And so, they drew almost instantly to the tidings of great joy, that there is salvation for all who will; and of course they as instantly became joyful. Their transition seems to have been immediate, from a state of ungodliness to a sense of God as their reconciled Father. Some, in the process of being alive unto God, are made first alive to Him as their offended judge; and then alive to Him as their friend, whose anger has been turned away, and who has nought towards them but thoughts of peace and of great kindness. Others again arrive at this without any stepping-stone. They are drawn at once by the cords of love, without being driven by the terrors of the law. Instead of being awakened by the thunders of its violated authority, they are awakened, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, by a music of sweeter and softer utterance, that breathes peace on earth and goodwill even to the guiltiest of all its generations.

Now we should not object to any one individual who is here present being so awakened. Let the habit and history of his life up to this moment have been what they may, we could not forbid that he should now look to the amplitude and the freeness of the gospel offer, and therein rejoice. Though never visited till now, with one thought of practical seriousness towards God—yet even now is it competent for him, to meet the Father of his spirit and count on a Father's tenderness. We ask not one moment of distrust or despondency at his hand; and should like it rather, that, sunken though he be in the depths of spiritual lethargy, he were aroused therefrom, not by the appalling denunciations of vengeance, but by the sounds of jubilee, and the proclaimed welcome from Heaven of a God waiting to be gracious. We know that there is a peace where there is no peace; and better than this sleep of death, where the disturbance of loud and perpetual alarm, from which there might be no respite to the sinner, till forced to betake himself to the alone effectual hiding-place. But better most assuredly still, that you saw the hiding-place to be open now; and that, without the interval of a single moment, you now fled for refuge there, and that the soul had no sooner broken loose from the tranquillity of nature, than it instantly fastened on the anchor of a hope that was more sure and steadfast. At this rate there would be no reason of intermediate dreariness. Converts would experience now, what was oft experienced

in the days of the apostles. Their belief would instantly come in the train of the gospel testimony—and their joy would instantly come in the train of their belief. The glad tidings of the new Testament would have precisely the same effect upon their spirit, with any other glad tidings. It would simply make them glad; and so, without the gloom or the agitation or the terror through which many have to pass, might there be a direct hold on the promises of scripture,—the settled peacefulness of a heart, that has found its rest and its dependence under the canopy of the accepted mediatorship.

We know that there are some who apprehend a danger in making the salvation of the gospel too accessible—who think that it ought not thus to be cheapened down to a level with any of those common beauties of nature, to the free participation of which all are welcome—who would demand in every instance a course of preceding terror, ere the disciple shall reach the triumph or the tranquillity of Faith—who feel as if it were due to the vindication of God's dignity as a Lawgiver, that every believer shall be solemnized into a more awful sense of the evil of sin, than he is likely to attain, by an easy and immediate transition from a state of wrath to a state of acceptance—and who, for this purpose, would have him to undergo the chastening of a legal discipline, during which he might taste the bitterness of remorse; and be left for a season to mourn or tremble under the hidings of God's offended countenance. Now we dispute not that this is one, and a very common way, in which the law acts as a schoolmaster for bringing men to Christ. Yet it is not the invariable way. And still we affirm, that the gospel cannot be trusted in too soon; and that men cannot give up too early their doubt and their unbelief in the truth of Heaven's communication; and that the more quickly we are rid of all suspense, in regard to God's own testimony, the better—or in other words, the more shortly that the period of dread and disturbance comes to an end, and the sooner we thus arrive at the tranquillity of the Christian faith, the more prompt and therefore the more pleasing is the homage that we render unto God's faithfulness.

And there is nought in the freeness of the gospel, that should cheapen or degrade the honours of the law. For in reference to those who do accept the offer of its immunities, Christ hath made ample provision for all their offences and indignities against the law of God, by taking upon Himself the burden of their atonement. And in reference to those who decline the offer, against them the law still reserves the right of its entire vindication. Those penalties, which, by fleeing to Christ, they might have evaded, will all be discharged upon them; and the frown of offended majesty will gather into tenfold darkness, because, to the provocation of a broken commandment, they have added the further provocation of a despised and rejected amnesty. Their first blow was at the sceptre of Heaven's authority; and for this they have incurred condemnation. Their second blow is at the sceptre of Heaven's clemency; and for this they seal their condemnation, and make it irreversible. It is most true, that, by the constitution of the gospel, there is a free and willing dispensation of mercy to all who will; and the vilest of sinners may at the instant, set himself down under the shadow of it, and be safe. Some have listened to its call, and the law has not been degraded by their justification—for in the person and sacrifice of Christ, the noblest of all indemnities has been rendered to it. And many have been unheeding of the call, and neither in them has the law been degraded or brought to shame—for the justice of God will only burn the more fiercely, because the voice of His compassion has been lifted up in vain. In very proportion to the tenderness of that slighted call which came forth from the mercy-seat, will be the force and the power of that anger which shall descend from the throne of judgment on the still unreclaimed hosts of the rebellious. The more rich the provision of grace is, the more fell and hopeless will be the condemnation of those guilty, who have spurned it away from them. If the herald of forgiveness have made full and open proclamation, the executioner of vengeance who comes after him, will on

that account break forth in the uttermost of his fury on all whom he finds to be still standing on the ground of defiance. Should the sacredness of God have appeared to let itself down by a proposal of fellowship with sinners,—tremendous will be the reaction of His offended dignity on those sinners, who shall refuse to entertain it. The very greatness of the offered deliverance will be the sorest aggravation to the doom of those who have met it with repulse and indignity—for how can they escape, when they neglect so great a salvation?

Such an economy is at one with the most familiar and recognized principles that are current in human society. The man who has been insulted and defrauded by another, and has suffered the provocation of many sore and repeated injuries at his hand, is admitted to have a direct claim of redress and reparation But should he forbear the prosecution of the claim—should he, in the tenderness of his nature towards the individual who had aggrieved him, stifle the vindictive propensities of his heart, and give way to a pitying sensation in behalf of himself and his family—should he, by a movement of generosity, hold out the right hand of fellowship, and assure the author of all his wrongs, that still his only desire was for peace, and his only purposes were those of yet unquelled kindness and regard for him—should he, though the offended party, come down so far as to entreat a reconciliation; and to protest, in the voice of a supplicant, his readiness to forgive all and to forget all—Who among you does not feel from the workings of his own bosom, that, though it were possible to stand out the provocation of direct and multiplied offences, yet to stand out the provocation of trampling under foot the despised and derided clemency that has been so generously awarded may not be possible? The malice, and the calumny, and the injustice of the man, may all be borne with; but the contempt, and the carelessness wherewith he hears of the offered pardon, or eyes the advances of a wished-for and attempted reconciliation—this cannot be borne with. The power of sufferance may have been tried beyond the limit of that uttermost compression whereof it is capable—but when at length it does break forth in the might of its elasticity; and overleaps all those barriers of restraint, within which the angry passions of nature lay struggling, as in the bosom of a volcano—who does not see that the patience and the long-suffering, which were in the mind of the long unwearied benefactor, and above all the message of forgiveness which proceeded from his lips—who does not see that these are the very causes which enhance the guilt of the scorner, the very elements which bring the most overwhelming discharge upon him?

And this is the very evolution which takes place under the economy of the gospel. You are now beseeched by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. In a little while, and you may run to hide yourselves from the wrath of the Lamb. To-day, if you will hear his voice, the goodness of God would lead you unto repentance. But if, in the hardness of thine impenitent heart, the touch of a practical impulse be quite unfelt by you, then is there another day which is called the day of the righteous judgments of God. There is not a hearer now present, who is not honestly invited to kiss the Son while He is in the way—but, along with the invitation, he must also take the alternative, that time is short; and the way of reconciliation will soon be closed against him; and the Son of God, instead of being found in that way, will be seated on a throne of judgment, whence His wrath shall speedily begin to burn against all who have failed compliance with Him. You have first set at nought the authority of the law; but this is a controversy that might still be settled. But if you now set at nought the grace of the gospel, this will be the consummation of your injuriousness towards God, and the breach between Him and you will be wholly irreparable. You first took from Him the tables of a holy commandment, and these to your own condemnation, you have broken. He then stretched forward the olive branch of forgiveness; and you, by your unconcern, may now lay upon it the most degrading mockery. It is this which gives the force and the operation of a two-edged sword to the preaching of the gospel; and, while the savour of life unto life to all who will, it is this which

makes it the savour of death unto death to all who will not. In proportion as the unrelenting sinner is plied now with the looks and the language of tenderness, will he have to brook then the glances of a fiery indignation; and that grace which were sufficient here to efface the whole guilt wherewith his nature is so deeply and inveterately tainted, will, if turned away from, but aggravate there the reproach and the reckoning of a God of vengeance.

You may now see how it is that the law and the gospel, instead of thwarting or obliterating each other in the exercise of their respective functions, reflect on the provinces of both the greatest possible force of illustration. In looking towards them, we may say with the apostle, behold then the goodness and the severity of God; and, instead of these in a state of conflict, each, by every new exercise, strengthening that wall of demarcation by which the territory of the other is guarded from all violence. Should a sinner, pursued by the terrors of the one, take refuge among the promises of the other—he does not therefore defraud the law of its challengeable rights; but renders to it, in fact, the greatest possible homage, by bowing unto Him, who, in honour of the law, bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. Or, if the sinner stand out in defiance to the threat of the law, and be alike indifferent to the promise of the gospel—then does the latter still leave him in the hands of the former. The gospel does not strip the law of a single prerogative; and, instead of harbouring the renegado who would trample upon both, the rejected mercy of the one unites with the incensed justice of the other, in giving tenfold force to the penalties of a broken commandment.

But Nature is alike blind to the reality of both. In the gospel, it takes no delight; and, from the law, it finds no disturbance. The voice of remorse, and the voice of mercy, are alike unheeded. The open gates of Hell and of Heaven, which lie on the other side of death, are hidden, as if by an impalpable screen, from the eye of the senses; and with every man who is still unawakened, they are equally hidden from his spiritual eye. One might conceive, that, by a partial unfolding of the screen, the way which leadeth from this world to the place of the accursed opened first on the view of the beholder; and then should we witness conscious guilt in its state of remorse and restlessness and alarm—till the screen had been further unfolded; and the way that leadeth to the place of the redeemed, floating with the signals of invitation, and announcing itself to be accessible to all, stood revealed to the eye of the earthly traveller. And this is a process that is oft exemplified on those, who are called out of darkness into marvellous light. But often, too, the intercepting veil is at once lifted away; and both the danger and the deliverance are made palpable alike to the soul, now ushered for the first time into a scene of manifestation; and no sooner are the thunders of an outraged law heard by the spiritual ear, than are heard along with it the glad tidings and assurances of the gospel; and, with both in your full contemplation at once, might you be urged to a choice between the death and the life that are set forth evidently before you. They are both placed beside each other in the text, which suggests to the reader, at one and the same time, the greatness of the ruin, and the greatness of the deliverance therefrom. It makes a dread of the one, the instrument for shutting up unto the other; and urges the alternative of the coming wrath, as the reason on which we ought to flee to the hope set before us in the gospel. For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

And it is observable, that the purpose for which the greatness of the salvation is here argued, is to vindicate a heavier doom on all those who shall live and die in the negligence thereof. After such an offer being rejected, their blood remaineth on their own heads. God wipeth His hands of them; and what more, may He well say, could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it? Had there been no way of escape pointed out to you, it might not have been so easy to answer the complaints of the sinner against God. But now that a way at once so palpable and so free has been provided, and provided too for all under the economy of the gospel—when, in lack of all righteousness of his own, the righteousness of Christ is held out even to the chief of sinners, that

he may put it on and appear before God invested in its honours and crowned with its everlasting rewards—when invited, as he most truly and tenderly is, to wash out his guilt in the blood of a satisfying atonement; and delivered at once from the fear and the shame of an accusing conscience, to walk in the land of the living with the erect confidence of him who never had offended—when plied with the demonstrations of a Father's love, that hath been made to beam upon the world from a Saviour's countenance, and to descend upon it in softest utterance from a Saviour's lips—when the oath, and the protestation, and the assurance of welcome and goodwill, and the widely-sounding call of look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved; when these are hung out to view in the indelible record of God's own testimony—when He hath thus embarked, and in the sight too of men and of angels, the credit of His honesty, on the fulfilment of the promise, that, if you will but close with Christ and accept of Him as He is offered to you in the gospel, you will receive along with Him an unfailing protection upon earth and a blissful eternity in Heaven—when things of mighty import as these are rung from sabbath to sabbath in your hearing; and every day of the week solicit your notice, through bibles or ministers or the various remembrancers of Him who hath not left Himself without a witness in the world—O tell us how you can pass through the ordeal of the coming judgment, if it shall be found, that, deaf and listless and wilful in the midst of all these encouragements, you still would grovel in the depths of your own sin and your own sordidness—moved by no terror in the threats of vengeance, and by no allurement in the offered friendship of God.

And what is it that makes you feel so reckless and so bravely independent? Do you really think yourselves in a state which it will do to die in? Would no misgiving sense of unpreparedness come over your heart, did you but once find yourselves in good earnest on the margin of eternity? Can you seriously imagine of God's law, that its honors can be compromised—or of God himself, that He can be mocked with impunity by a creature who his whole life long has turned him to his own way? Tell us, honestly, whether the peace of your now deep and settled unconcern, is that of a man who has blinked the question of his eternity, and so left it unresolved—or that of a man who has sifted and scrutinized it in all its bearings, and at length placed it on the footing that will rightly uphold him in security through life, and keep him firm and undismayed under the agonies of his death-bed? What! can you lay your hand upon your heart, and say that there is nothing there which might well make the death and the judgment and the eternity to be thoughts of fearfulness; or bold in the sense of your own integrity, could you now stand the reckoning of a Holy God without a gospel and without a Saviour? Are you not aware of sin, that it has deranged the whole of the relationship between you and God; and is it not true that this is the strong though secret jealousy, under which you would fain escape the contemplation of His presence or tremble at the thought of Him as of an enemy who was armed to destroy you? And whether is it for Him the offended party, or for you the offender, to find out the adjustment of this sore controversy; and to dictate the terms and the treaty of reconciliation? Or, should He, in pity to our fallen world, stoop from the heights of His affronted majesty, and again beckon to His own realms of love and of purity its hapless wanderers—tell me is it for you to quarrel with that path of access which He has prescribed, or strong in the testimony of an unappalled conscience, to say that you want no salvation and stand in need of no mediatorship.

But we cannot think of any here present, that, with minds thus made up, they can bid their whole-hearted defiance to the invitations of the gospel. They do know that all is not right about them. They do feel that many are the bible texts which look hard at them. They are aware of God as a Lawgiver; and how it is that He can both be just and a Saviour, is a knot of difficulty in their minds, which, till resolved, leaves the question of their eternity at abeyance. There is the impression of a barrier between Him who sitteth on the throne and their own persons, which to them at least

is insuperable. And perhaps at one time or other, the thought may have come over their hearts—what a mighty enlargement were this barrier done away and the sore burden of this heavy and helpless alienation were disposed of, and all remembrance of our sins were expunged for ever, and the gate of a secure and blissful Heaven were open to receive us, and we heard the shouts of welcome gratulation on bending our footsteps thitherward. What a contrast to the things and the influences which are now around us, could we find it only thus—and we, in full and confident march to immortality, knew the Saviour to be our friend, and God to be rejoicing over us. Well then my brethren; and is this the translation into a state of betterness that your fancy ever dwelt upon, and has longed to realise? This thing on which you are so intensely set, is the very thing that the gospel hath spread out before you. By what mistake is it, that you and the gospel of Jesus Christ have not found their way to each other sooner? What you so vehemently wish, He hath accomplished. His right arm hath brought for you the whole of this salvation; and now it is finished, and lies ready at this moment for your acceptance. Why stand you thus in vain and fruitless aspirations, after a matter that is already secured—and which now you are simply invited to lay hold of? Grar that you are a sinner above all the sinners on the face of the earth—still the blood of Christ overmatches the virulence of your guilt; and the open path of access that He has consecrated, you also are welcome to walk upon; and God who waiteth to be gracious, only waiteth for your trust in His mercy through the atonement of the cross, that he may treat you mercifully. And even now may you strike an agreement with the God whom you have offended; and make a final escape from all future vengeance, and from all your present forebodings, by fleeing for refuge unto Christ Jesus and laying hold of His great salvation.

SERMON XVI.

The relation of the Law to the Gospel.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—ROMANS. x. 4.
"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."—1 TIMOTHY i. 5.

I. THE law of God may be viewed in a twofold aspect—either as that by which, when we imbibe the virtues that it enjoins, we build up and beautify a personal character; or as that by which, when we satisfy the demands that it prefers, we acquire a title both to the full enjoyment of its rewards and to a full exemption from its penalties. There is a distinction here, which, if steadily kept in view, would, we are persuaded, prove a safeguard, both against the errors of legality, and the equally pernicious errors of antinomianism. The subject is truly an important one; for we reckon, that the whole economy of the gospel is pervaded by it—nor can we think of a likelier expedient for the illustration of the evangelical system, than just to lay hold of the distinction that we have now announced in its principle, and then follow it out into its legitimate applications.

First then, when the law is viewed in relation to the righteousness which constitutes the title to its rewards; then, when we strive to make this out by our own obedience, the aim is to possess ourselves of a legal right to the kingdom of Heaven. It is our object to render an adequate price for that glorious inheritance; and that the value given in the worth of our performances, shall be equal to the value received, in the worth of that eternal blessedness which we labour to realise We proceed on the imagination of a contract between God and man—whereof the counterpart terms are a fulfilment of the law's requisitions upon the one side,

and a bestowment of the law's rewards upon the other. The one is the purchase money—the other is the payment. They stand related to each other, as work does to wages. Obedience is the allotted task—Heaven is the stipulated hire. When this is the conception present to the mind, the going about to establish our own righteousness, is just going about to establish our own right to immortal happiness. And like as the servant who hath accomplished his term or his task, can challenge from his master on earth the covenanted recompense—so it is figured by many, that, after the course of virtue in this life is ended, he who hath acquitted himself of its achievements and its toils, may challenge from his Master in Heaven that everlasting life, which under the law of "do this and live," is held out as the reward of obedience.

Now this spirit of legality, as it is called, is nearly the universal spirit of humanity. It is not Judaism alone, it is Nature. They are not the Israelites only who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. The very same thing may be detected among the religionists of all countries and all ages. Their cleaving and constant tendency is to bargain for heaven by their services—nor can they easily rid themselves of this mercantile imagination. When they attempt a career of righteousness, it is to establish a right. It is to win their salvation by merit—just as any labourer wins the remuneration that he has wrought for. It is to constitute a claim, which they might prefer at the court of the Divine Lawgiver, in plea of payment—and which payment is held to consist, in the favour of God; and admission to those realms of bliss, where He reigns and holds unceasing jubilee, among the choirs and companies of the celestial. This is the obstinate tendency of nature, charged in the Apostle's days on the ignorance of the Israelites—but certainly such an ignorance, as mere doctrine or mere information cannot dissipate. There is in fact a legal disposition in the heart, which keeps its ground against all the articles and demonstration of orthodoxy; and, long after that jurisprudence hath made most clear and conclusive argument of the utter shortness of human virtue, yet will man as if by the bias of a constitutional necessity, recur to the old legal imagination, of this virtue being a thing of desert, and of Heaven being the reward which is due to it.

And certain it is, that for man to establish a right by his righteousness, is in the face of all jurisprudence. When this is the object after which he strives, he indeed spends his labour after that which is nought—wearying and wasting himself on a thing which is impracticable. If there be one character of the law of God more distinct and more declared than another, it is the resolute, the unbending assertion which it makes of its own authority; and, in virtue of which, it will stoop to no compromise with human disobedience. There is in this respect, a high state and sovereignty in the divine government, from which it is impossible that it ever can descend. There might in some other way be acceptance for the sinner; but never by the admission of the sinner's right to the rewards of a law which he hath violated. This is a position, which, whether in the dispensation of the Old or in the dispensation of the New Testament, never once is receded from. Both the law and the gospel alike disown man's legal right to the rewards of eternity; and if he be too proud to disown it himself, he remains both a victim of condemnation by the one, and a helpless a hopeless outcast from the mercy of the other. If man will persist, as nature strongly inclines him, in seeking to make out a title-deed to Heaven by his own obedience, then that obedience must be perfect,—else there is a flaw in the title-deed, which is held to be irreparable. It is thus that the law of Heaven looks down upon Earth, in the firm the unfaltering aspect of its own inflexibility; and that if man seeks, in establishing a righteousness, to establish a right—it forthwith becomes a question of equity; and the principles of strict, absolute, unchanging equity, are brought rigidly and relentlessly to bear upon him. On the moment that the element of a right is introduced into the question between God and man; then man instead of sueing for Heaven in the attitude of a petitioner for mercy, is demanding it in the attitude of a claimant

for justice—and the law accepts of his challenge upon his own terms. The two parties are confronted together on the ground of equity and truth; and the matter will be decided on considerations proper to that ground, and upon no other. If man, on the one hand, have presumptuously lifted himself up to a claim, that is above the merits of his obedience—the law, on the other hand, will not, on that account, let itself down beneath the level of its own demands and its own declarations. Man hath braved the combat upon an arena of his own choosing; and it is by the rules of that arena, that his fate must be determined. He hath appealed unto Cæsar, and to Cæsar he must go. He hath made mention of his right; and, by the very term, he hath committed his cause to a tribunal of justice. He hath sisted himself before God as a lawgiver—even the God who says that He will not be mocked; and that the law which hath proceeded out of his mouth, can no more be nullified or brought to shame, than can the truth and righteousness of the Godhead.

It is thus, that, in seeking to establish a right by his righteousness, he finds that even if he have but committed one sin—there is the barrier of what may be called a moral necessity in his way, which it is impossible to force. The God who cannot lie, cannot recall the utterance which Himself hath made against the children of iniquity; and He hath denounced a curse, upon every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of His law to do them. And so it is that every sinner who goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, is either borne down by the misgivings of a conscience which only serves to haunt and paralyze him; or he lives at ease, because living in the delusion of a vain and groundless security. For one of two things must happen. Either with a high and therefore a just conception of the standard of the law, he will be dispirited and sink into despair; or with a low conception of that standard, he, though but grovelling among the mere decencies of civil life or the barren formalities of religious service, will aspire no farther and yet count himself safe.

Now herein lies the grand peculiarity of the gospel It pronounces on the utter insignificance of all that man can do for the establishment of his right to the kingdom of Heaven; and yet, he must be somehow or other provided with such a right, ere that he can find admittance there. It holds out eternal life to him, not on the footing of a simple gratuity—but in return for, and on the consideration of a righteousness. His own righteousness it most pointedly and peremptorily refuses to entertain as that consideration; and makes throughout all its pages, the total the unqualified denial of the efficacy of human virtue, when directed to the end of substantiating upon its own merits a title or a legal claim to the rewards of immortality. This no doubt was one great and primary end of the law—even that man, by the fulfilment of its requisitions, might obtain for himself a right to its rewards. But this end of the law, man hath hopelessly frustrated by his own disobedience. He hath entirely forfeited the right; and he cannot re-establish it, with all his strenuousness. And yet he would fain make the trial. It is that to which nature is constantly prompting him. There is an inveteracy in the legal spirit—so that it remains unquelled by the declarations of the gospel from without, however responded to from within, by the depositions of a conscience, that cannot but feel the shortness and the insufficiency of all our obedience. It is in opposition to this legal spirit, that the worthlessness, the absolute nullity of all human virtue, is, in the records of the evangelical dispensation, affirmed so constantly; and that the same doctrine is so zealously repeated, by the faithful and orthodox ministers of that dispensation. That righteousness of his own, wherewith man would proudly array and set himself forward as a claimant for Heaven, the Bible, with all honest and fearless expounders of the Bible, pronounces upon as filthy rags; and nothing can exceed the terms of degradation, in which it stigmatizes, nay vilifies all human righteousness, when ought like a right is founded thereupon.

Still without the investiture of a legal right, man obtains no part nor possession in the inheritance above. It is not by an act of mercy alone, that the gate of Heaven is opened to the sinner. With his entry there, there is in some way or

other, a merit associated. It is not enough that he appears with a petition at the bar of mercy. He must be furnished with a plea, which he can state at the bar of justice—not, it would appear, the plea of his own deservings, which we have already found that the gospel holds no terms with; and therefore with a plea, founded solely and exclusively on the deservings of another. Now what we reckon to be the very essence of the gospel, is the report which it brings to a sinful world of a solid and satisfying plea; and that every sinner is welcome to the use of it. In defect of his own righteousness, which he is required to disown, as having any part in his meritorious acceptance with God, he is told of an everlasting righteousness which another has brought in; and which he is invited, nay commanded, to make mention of. It is thus that Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness, that is for justifying righteousness, or for a righteousness which gives a right to him who possesses it. This end of the law we have fallen short of; for we could have only achieved it for ourselves by our perfect and unfailing obedience. Christ therefore hath achieved it for us. He hath for us, by his sacrifice, borne the penalties of the law. He hath for us, by his obedience, won the rewards of the law. And, by the constitution of the gospel, every one who believeth is on this high vantage ground. He is as much exempted from the denounced vengeance of a broken law, as if in his own person he had already borne it. He is as much secured in the stipulated recompense of an observed law, as if in his own person he had rendered a full and faultless observation. He has attained an interest in the righteousness of Christ by faith; and with this he has attained the end of the law for righteousness.

And so this righteousness by faith, is the frequent, the favourite theme, of evangelical ministers. It may indeed be called the Shibboleth of their preaching. They are men who exalt to the uttermost the righteousness by faith. And they are men who degrade to the uttermost the righteousness by works. But let it be distinctly kept in view, that it is in respect of its sufficiency for the establishment of a valid right to Heaven that they exalt the one—and only in respect of its insufficiency for the establishment of this right, that they so depreciate the other.—And this, not because, as many do imagine, of the low; but truly because of the high estimation in which virtue is held by them. They first look to the law, that pure and perfect exemplar of all righteousness—and there they learn what a noble and elevated and perfect thing, is that morality which it prescribes to us. They then look to the actual state of human obedience; and just in proportion to their lofty estimation of virtue in itself, is their lowly estimation of virtue in man. It is just because so alive to the worth of virtue, that they are so alive to the worthlessness of man; and the higher their regards are cast towards its supreme excellency, the lower must actual humanity appear in their eyes, as beneath the standard from which human virtue has so immeasurably fallen. They have indeed a very humble reckoning of what men are, but only because they have a very exalted reckoning of what men ought to be; and, so far from these advocates for the righteousness of faith having lost all sense of morality or of its importance, they have fled to this righteousness as their only refuge, just because a reverence for morality exists so purely and so sacredly in their bosoms. Why is it, that they prefer that righteousness of Christ which faith trusts in, as their only argument for Heaven, to that righteousness of man which is yielded by the obedience of works, and on which so many would found as their pretention and their plea for the rewards of Heaven's blessedness? It is just because they see perfection in the one righteousness, and pollution in the other—in the one an adequate tribute to the sovereignty of the law, and therefore a full and finished right to its rewards; in the other all the worthlessness of a lame and imperfect offering, and on which therefore no right can be alleged without violence to the law's incensed dignity. These surely are not the men, among whom all sense of morality lies extinct and prostrate in their bosoms. There appears rather to be the very strength and spirit of a moral essence in that doctrine which they hold; and it seems the fruit of their more adequate homage to the law, that, under the

feeling of their own distance and deficiency therefrom, they have laid hold upon Christ as the end of the law for righteousness.

II. But this though one, is not the only end of the law. It had another and a distinct object, from that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a right to its promised rewards—even that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a rightness of character, in the cultivation and the exercise of its bidden virtues. The legal right which obedience confers is one thing. The personal rightness which obedience confers is another. For the first object the law has now become useless; and, having fallen short of personal righteousness ourselves, we must now find our legal right only in the righteousness of Christ. For the latter object, the law still retains all the use and all the importance which it ever had. It is that written tablet, on which are inscribed the virtues of the Godhead; and we, by copying these on the tablet of our own characters, are restored to the image of Him who created us. We utterly mistake the design and economy of the gospel, if we think—that, while the first function of the law has been superseded under the new dispensation, the second has been superseded also; or because the penalties of our old disobedience are now done away, the precepts of our new obedience are therefore dispensed with. Obedience for a legal right is everywhere denounced in the New Testament, as a presumptuous and vain enterprise. Obedience for a personal rightness, is everywhere urged in the New Testament, as an enterprise, the prosecution of which forms the main business of every disciple; and the full achievement of which is that prize of his high calling, to which he must press forward continually. For the one end, the law has altogether lost its efficacy; and we, in our own utter inability to substantiate its claims, must seek to be justified only by the righteousness of Christ. For the other end, the law retains its office as a perfect guide and exemplar of all virtue; and we, empowered by strength from on high to follow its dictates, must seek to be sanctified by the transference of its bidden godliness, and its bidden charity, and its bidden uprightness, upon our own characters. Human virtue hath ceased, under the economy of grace, to be the price of Heaven—for this power it lost, and lost irrecoverably, by its ceasing to be perfect. But human virtue is still the indispensable preparation for Heaven; and we, helped from the sanctuary above, to struggle with all the imperfections of our corrupt and carnal nature below, must, by a life of prayer and painstaking and all duteous performance, make way through the frailties and temptations of our sinful state in time, to a meetness for the joys of that endless inheritance which is beyond it. It is no longer the purchase-money, by which to buy your right of entry or admittance into the marriage supper of the Lamb. But it is the wedding garment, without which you will never be seated among the beatitudes of that glorious and immortal festival. To be meet in law, and without violence done to the jurisprudence of Heaven, we must be invested by faith with the righteousness of Christ. To be meet in character, and without offence or violence to the spirit or the taste of Heaven's society, we must be invested with the graces of our own personal righteousness.

But thus it is, that the ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ have been so grievously misunderstood. They strenuously affirm of human virtue, that it has no place in our title-deed to the Jerusalem above. And therefore, they have been charged with denying it that place, which it invariably and essentially has in the hearts and natures of all who enter therein. Because they have disjoined it from the legal claim, the imagination is that they have also disjoined it from the persona character—or because not permitted to be set forth and blazoned in a title-deed, that therefore it needs not by their theology, to have a residence or a being in the souls of believers.

And not only have these faithful expounders of the New Testament been charged with hostility to the cause of personal righteousness; but the New Testament itself has been charged with inconsistency upon this subject. There is a felt puzzle in the minds of men, in consequence of its apparently opposite representations on the importance of good

works, and on the place and consideration which they should be made to occupy in the system of the gospel—denounced at one time as insignificant and worthless, demanded at another as indispensable to all true discipleship. The explanation is, that they are available for one end, but they are unavailable for another. They avail not for justification. They are inseparable from sanctification. They confer no right to the favour of God; but they enter as constituents into that rightness, without which no man shall see His face. They now possess no importance whatever in the covenant between God and man. They still possess a supreme importance in the character of both—the just and beneficent works of the Deity, being the fruits or the emanations of His innate personal righteousness; and our works of the same or a similar kind, being in like manner the fruits of that inborn personal righteousness, which, imprest upon us by the Holy Spirit, renews us after the image, and fits us for the everlasting society of Him who created us. The works of a believer are short of perfection; and therefore short of that end for which the law is now superseded, and Christ is substituted in its place—even the end of making good our right by our righteousness.

But the works of every believer are growing up, and carrying him forward to perfection; and, for this end, the law still retains the office of a guide and of a stimulant—even the end of making good a seemly and a suitable character, for that land of perfect love and perfect sacredness, where the servants of God for ever serve Him. We never can by our most strenuous observation of the law, arrive at a juridical or a forensic right to Heaven. But it is just by our observation of the law, as a law of piety, and purity, and equity, and kindness, that we arrive at that personal righteousness, which makes us meet for Heaven's exercises and Heaven's joys—the exercises of a morality that is then faultless, the joys of a then complete and unsullied virtue. Virtue, when regarded as composing that assemblage of personal qualities which we must carry with us to Heaven, has all the paramount importance which it ever had. And so while by one passage of the New Testament, the law in reference to the former end is set aside, and Christ put in its room—by another passage, the law in reference to the latter end is retained; and we accordingly read, that "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

We have deemed it necessary to say thus much in vindication, for the advocates and expounders of that system which is commonly known by the name of "the evangelical." They are still much misconceived and misrepresented in general society—as men whose preaching is injurious to the cause of good morals, and whose doctrine sheds a withering mildew over the virtues of our population. Their doctrine is manifestly popular; but the imagination of many is, that this is because impunity and indulgence for sin are popular. Even the semblance of a pure moral indignation does mix itself occasionally with this antipathy to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and so forms part of that subtle delusion, which alienated from evangelical preaching, the respect of many of the most intelligent, as well as the patronage of the most influential in our land.

Let us conclude these remarks with two distinct particulars. First, then, know, that the legal right is what you cannot work for; but that in the gospel of Jesus Christ it is freely offered for your acceptance. The very essence, we apprehend, of the gospel, lies in this offer. We there read of the gift of righteousness; or that gift, by which there is conveyed to you, the privilege of a rightful admittance into Heaven. Be assured that you waste your efforts on a hopeless impracticability, when you labour to win this privilege for yourselves. Receive Christ by faith; and lay a confident hold on the propitiation made by that Saviour, who "became sin for you although he knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But, secondly—having thus secured what the apostle in one passage calls the end of the law; count it your unceasing business, to labour for what the apostle in another passage calls the end of the

commandment. Though the law has ceased as a covenant, it has not ceased as a rule of life. Though it can no longer be the instrument by which you shall obtain a legal plea for Heaven, it is still the instrument by which you shall obtain that preparation which is as indispensable as a plea—even the preparation of Heaven's character and of Heaven's virtue. Greatly do they mistake the whole design and economy of the gospel, who think that it brings any exemption from the services of righteousness along with it. There is, in truth, a busier and a more abundant service than before; and the only distinction is, that, whereas under the one dispensation you served in the oldness of the letter, under the other dispensation you serve in the newness of the spirit. The obedience now is of a more refined, and pure, and exalted character, than ever was obedience then. It is obedience altogether divested of that mercenary character, which never ceases to adhere to it, so long as viewed legally, it is regarded but as the term of a bargain. Instead of a constrained stipulation, it becomes a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty; and, proceeding as it does from the new taste and desire of a heart now emancipated from the bondage and the terror of a felt condemnation, it is as unlike to what it formerly was as the obedience of a seraph is unlike to that of a slave. And be assured, that, unless this new obedience is entered on, you have no part nor interest in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel which bringeth salvation, bringeth a present salvation, as well as a future one; and they who are the subjects of it, are under promise of deliverance from the power of sin here, as well as have the assured prospect of deliverance from the punishment of sin hereafter. O let us then do honour to the faith that we profess, by our abounding in those fruits of righteousness which emanate therefrom. And never let gainsayers have to allege of that holy name by which we are called, that it is prostituted by those who wear it, into a license for iniquity. Let the faith of the gospel approve itself in our hearts, to bring along with it the charm and the efficacy of a new moral existence. And, in our individual case, let the mystery be realised of our not boasting in the works of the law as forming our rightful claim for Heaven, and yet of our having become the workmanship of God, and our being created in Christ Jesus unto good works—so as that they form the very business and ornament of our lives. Thus shall our light shine before men, and others seeing our good works shall glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

SERMON XVII.

On Faith and Repentance.

"Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—Acts xx. 21.

It has been made a great question among theologians, whether faith or repentance comes first? Now though, practically, faith on the one hand has a great influence upon repentance; and, on the other hand, repentance has also a great influence upon faith—yet we do not hold it indispensable to make a full settlement, or a full statement, in your hearing, of the order of precedency between them. Did we attempt fully to propound this argument here, we should find that altogether it was a great deal too subtle for the pulpit; and we therefore satisfy ourselves for the present with the following deliverance. No man can begin either the work of faith, or the work of repentance, too soon; and he should not wait for the one, ere the other shall be entered on. There should be no putting off, for the sake of any adjustment of this sort. If told to believe,

he should stir up all that is in him—whether much or little—all that is already in him, that he might flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel. If told to repent, he should also stir up all that is in him, that he might haste and make no delay to keep the commandment. When he hears the tidings of great joy, his duty is to entertain them. When he hears the call of turning unto God, his as instant duty is to cease to do evil and learn to do well. We shall not therefore discuss the order of these two christian graces; but, falling in with the actual order set before us by the apostle in the text, present you, first with our observations on repentance towards God, and secondly with our observations on faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the same apostle, who, in describing how it was that he executed the message wherewith he had been entrusted, tells us of his having showed both to Jews and Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God and do works meet for repentance.

I. To repent of sin, is something more than to grieve for it. It is to turn from it. It is something more than to regret your sins—it is to renounce them. Repentance may begin with sorrow, but it does not end there. Sorrow of itself is not repentance; it only works repentance. And he alone fulfils this work, who gives up the evil of his doings, and enters with full purpose of heart on a life of new obedience.

We have just adverted to the question, whether faith or repentance comes first. And there has been another question stirred—which part of repentance comes first, or which part is it that comes before the other. Does it not first begin with the heart, and then take effect upon the history? Must not the work commence with the desires of the inner man; and then go forth in regular order, so as to tell on the deeds of the outer an?

And is it not preposterous, some have agined, to urge on our hearers the palble reformation of their conduct, ere e have made sure that a process of regeneration within has really been entered on? We answer, no; and we think that in this matter a sensitive and misapplied orthodoxy has done a great deal of mischief, and that the systems and speculations of theology have been often so conducted as greatly to embarrass and to cast entanglements on the practical work of christianization. What we have said before, we say again. As much as lies in them let every man believe as he can, and let every man also repent as he can. It is not preposterous, it is in the order of nature, and there is nothing contrary to it in the order of grace—that men should be called upon at the very outset of their repentance, and, as if it were the first footstep of their enterprise on which they had embarked, to give up the evil of their ways and the evil of their doings, and to put their palpable iniquities away from them. This plain business ought not to be suspended on any controversy, about what man can do, or what he cannot do. The terrors of the law can restrain a thief from open depredations; and why might he not be adjured by the terrors of the Lord, to give up his secret purloinings or his midnight robberies? The shame of exposure will keep many a transgressor from the indulgence of licentiousness in the face of day; and why might he not be told, on the dread solemnies of that coming judgment when many shall awaken to shame and everlasting contempt, to give up all the abominable works of darkness? If told of poison in the cup, however otherwise alluring to his taste, the most inveterate of drunkards would stay his ravenous appetite, and show he had the power to refrain from it; and why might not the same power be manifested and put forth, when told, that, by every new act of intoxication, he nourisheth within his heart the worm that dieth not—he kindles into greater fierceness that fire which never shall be quenched? If the prospect of the malefactor's cell, and the execution which follows, be that which terrifies many thousands in society from the perpetration of crimes against the state—might not the prospect of that living lake, the lake of agony and vengeance, into which all the children of iniquity will be cast, have the like effect in terrifying men from their disobedience and their daring criminalities against the majesty of Heaven's Lawgiver? In preaching repen-

tance then, let us strike an immediate blow, and sound an immediate alarm against all the deeds of human wickedness. We even now then, and without waiting for any order of precedency, as for principles first and performances afterwards—we even now call for such performances as ye can set your hand to; and that though, at the first shaking of the dry bones, we should behold nothing else than the deeds of an outward reformation. Still we bid, and that too their instant, their peremptory compliance, when we tell the thief to give up his depredations; and the drunkard to give up his riotous excesses; and the impure to give up his secret abominations; and the unfair dealer to give up his dishonesties; and the undutiful son or daughter to give up their contempt and disobedience of parents; and the liar to give up his falsehoods, and his frauds; and the swearer to give up his daring liberties with the name of God; and the sabbath-breaker to give up his no less daring liberties with the day of God—even that God, who, though he dwelleth in heaven, looketh down upon earth, alike jealous of his day and of his name. Against one and all of these iniquities, we would lift the trumpet and spare not. In reference to one and all of them, we say go and sin no more. There must be no delay, no parrying. It must be the speed of an instantaneous flight, like that of men running for their lives from the awful wrath of God, which is upon the soul of every one that doeth evil. If ye will not forsake these evil doings, the vengeance of Him, who is as a consuming fire will overtake you. Repent then even now of all this your wickedness, that is to say, renounce it—else there is not even the beginning of a good change upon you. From this moment cease to do evil, and learn to do works meet for repentance.

We are aware, there is a theology which undervalues these reformations. And the reason is that many are the thousands of human society, who stand in no need of being thus reformed; and yet stand chargeable with all the guilt of nature's enmity, and nature's indifference to God. They are neither fraudulent, nor intemperate, nor profane; but as little, on the other hand, are they godly, or have they in them aught like the love of God, aught like a sense or a principle of godliness. What signifies, it may be thought, although the thief should give up his stealing, and the drunkard his habits of intoxication—if the whole effect of the change shall be to transform him into one of those decent moral well-living citizens, who still are but citizens of earth, taking no thought, and feeling no care, either about God or about eternity. But mark well a difference here; and if you ponder it aright, it may perhaps lead the orthodox among you, to have a higher respect than heretofore for that practical preaching,—the first note of whose trumpet, as it were, when sounding the proclamation to the workers of iniquity, is that that iniquity must be abandoned. Mark well we say the difference between the conscience-stricken man, who has ceased to be a drunkard, because the preacher spoke effectually to his conscience and to his fears—and the irreligious man who never was a drunkard, because his constitutional propensities never urged him to the habit, or his aversion to all that is disgraceful and unseemly kept him aloof from it. In the one case of sobriety, we admit that there may be nothing which one can hold to be of any religious value, or put to the account of religion at all. But in the other case of sobriety, it is religion and religion alone that has had to do with it. The man became sober, because the minister told him, and told him truly, that all drunkards should be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone—and he was frightened for his soul. There is all the difference in the world, between the man who has been sober all his days though he never thinks of God, and the man who has become sober because he is afraid of God—or between the man, who, constitutionally upright and temperate, never once trembled at the thought of hell; and the man who renounces his dissipations and his dishonesties, because this thought has been infixed into his heart by words uttered from the pulpit, and now pursues and agonises him like an arrow sticking fast.

It is this which makes a total difference between the two cases, between the one man's sobriety and the other man's so-

briety. In deed and in outward description, they form one and the same virtue; but in spirit and character, they are as unlike as possible. There is no religion in the one sobriety. The other sobriety is entered on, under the force of a religious consideration—in the spirit and under the visitation of a religious earnestness. The former is the sobriety of a man who never thinks either of heaven or of hell. The latter is like the first movement of one, who is fleeing from hell and seeking after heaven. It is the first footstep, as it were, of his christian education. God forbid that it should be considered as the whole of it, or that any trembling sinner should have the misfortune to sit under a minister, who can tell him no more than this of the way of salvation. He is but yet at the alphabet of christianity; and let him not learn the alphabet imperfectly, in our hurry to get him onward to the higher lessons of it. He has not yet entered into reconciliation with God; but look to the expression of our text "repentance *towards*"—he is moving towards God, and that is what the man of mere constitutional uprightness, or constitutional sobriety, is not at all thinking of. He is not yet a citizen of Zion; but leave his conscience to its workings, and let it tell in the reformation of its habits; and he is seeking towards Zion and his face is thitherwards. What he is now doing, and this you cannot say for the other, he is doing unto God. He who said, "a cup of cold water given to a disciple for his sake shall have its reward," will not despise this day of small things. He will not break this bruised reed, nor quench this smoking flax; but at once pities, and is pleased, with this incipient effort of a trembling penitent—this shaking of his dry bones, however proud theology may scowl upon it. The science taught in our halls of divinity may find it a thing of difficult adjustment, and be at a loss what to make of the phenomenon—the external reformation of a man, not yet initiated for aught we know, even in the first principles of orthodoxy; but only, under the impulse of nature's conscience and nature's fears, awakening to a sense of his danger and his guilt, and breaking off from the sins and the profligacies of other days. Now what we say is—let no embarrassment be thrown in that man's way. Nay leave him alone, rather than that his activities should be overborne under the weight of our ponderous theological systems. Let him not be interrupted in the midst of his doings; nor the dread of legality freeze into a sort of suspended animation, that soul which was awakening in its own way to the reality of eternal things. Let no cabalistic orthodoxy put its restraints upon him—leading him and the world at large, to misapprehend the real character and design of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is to extirpate moral evil from the earth, and substitute in its place the reign of truth and charity and righteousness.

But the matter does not stop here. Though repentance begins thus, it does not end thus. Christianity is not satisfied with a mere work of external reformation; and, what is more, neither will the man's own conscience be satisfied. Let his be but honest endeavours, and honest fears; and the unavoidable effect will be, that the more he does to obtain peace with his offended God, the more he feels the utter insufficiency of all his doings. The more he rises in his deeds of obedience to the law, the more the law rises in its demands upon him. He may have given up to drink, or to swear, or to speak evil of his neighbour, or to wander abroad in daring profanation on the sabbath; but he is deeply conscious, nay more conscious than ever, that he has not yet compassed the whole length and breadth of the divine commandments. What happened to Paul happens also to him—"But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The meaning of this is, the commandment came—that is a sense of its purity, of its elevation, of its exceeding height above all the possibilities of human performance, now visited his heart; and this larger view of the commandment, gave him a larger view of his own exceeding distance and deficiency therefrom; and thus sin revived, or a sense of his own exceeding sinfulness was more alive and awake than ever in his bosom; and so he died, or felt more emphatically than ever that the law's condemnation to death was upon him, and that he could not with all his efforts and all his aspirations, make his escape from it. It is well that he has put

the evil of his outward doings away from him. It is well, that, by the shaking of the dead bones, some larger clods, as it were, of earthliness and corruption, have thus been shaken off, and no longer adhere to him. It is very well that the matter has proceeded thus far; and that we can speak of this one external reformation, of that other literal work of obedience. But with all this, he may be a dead man still. The life of obedience may not be there. The love, without which a willing obedience is impossible, may be altogether wanting. The hand may have been compelled, under the influence of terror, to its reluctant task; but the heart refuses to go along with it. Still it is well, that, when the law, with the voice and authority of a school-master, told him to give up this one and that other disobedience, he obeyed the lesson and gave them up accordingly. But this is not the only lesson which the law gives him. It tells him of the uncancelled guilt of his past life, which he can make no atonement for. It tells him of a curse and of a condemnation, which, under the government of a righteous Sovereign, cannot be recalled. It tells him of its own sacredness—the sacredness of the law, and the dread majesty of the lawgiver. It reveals to him heights of obedience, which, to corrupt man, are inaccessible; and lets him know that, toil as he may beneath these heights, he, with all his pains and all his efforts, is but multiplying his transgressions, and becoming every day a deadlier offender than before. It reveals God to him as an enemy and an avenger; and yet bids him love this God—love the being, whom, with a just sense of his own sinfulness, he cannot but regard, as a strong man armed to destroy him.

We repeat it is well that the first lesson should have been listened to, and in some measure obeyed. It forms a sort of guarantee that the other lessons will be of effect also—that the man's conscience will become every day more tender—that he will see more and more of the perfection of God's law, and of his own guiltiness—that, in proportion as he multiplies his doings, he will be made more clearly to perceive the excess of the law's requirements above all that he can do; so that every new day swells the account of his debt and of his deficiency; and, in spite of all his efforts, the conviction grows upon him—that he is a helpless and a hopeless outcast from the favour of God, and from the joys of a blissful eternity. And here the question comes, what is to be the end of this? It is clear that every thing the man does, but aggravates his despair. He is sinking deeper and deeper every day, into an abyss of despondency. His prospects become blacker with every attempt he makes to relieve himself—fighting as it were against a barrier through which he cannot make his way, while the penalties of an unfulfilled law rise like a wall of fire in threatening array against him. It is perfectly clear that with but the one lesson of repentance, there is no getting on. Repentance is a return to that law from which we had departed. But when the law wont recall its own threats of vengeance—it wont cancel its own long and fearful account against us—it wont look on and be silent, while we are taking on new debts; and by new delinquencies of thought word and deed, come day after day under a heavier reckoning and responsibility than before. The law is not of that supple pliant accommodating character, not of such a flexible and yielding disposition, so full of complaisance and facility and good-natured connivance—that, for the sake of our convenience, it will let down its own exactions; or become a precarious, nay a polluted thing, by lowering and suiting its precepts to our powers and possibilities of obedience. The law utterly refuses to make any half-way compromise of this sort. It insists, and that most rigidly, on its own terms; and if we have only the law to deal with, we see not how we can fling off the burden and the terror of this lawful deliverance from our own persons—"cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of this book to do them." If we have doings with no other party than the law, or with God viewed as a Lawgiver, we are truly placed in a most inextricable dilemma. If we have no other than one lesson to work at, even the lesson of repentance, which is merely coming back again to the law, we are fairly shut up, and that to endless and unescapable despair.

But, blessed be God, there is another party beside the law, that we are called upon to do with; and to which the law itself is our conductor and our guide—a school-master for bringing us to Christ, at whose hands we are provided with an outlet and a place of refuge—and we are still shut up no doubt, not to despair however, as heretofore, but shut up by the terrors of the law to the faith of the gospel. And, blessed be God, it is not one lesson only that is prescribed—and that a lesson, to which, if we are confined, and without the light breaking in upon us of any other truth or from any other quarter, then the longer we learn at it the more wretched we shall be; but, ever blessed be God, there is another lesson! And the two so fitted, so helpful to each other, that the work of both, when they are thus joined together, goes on most prosperously: And so the same apostle who taught and testified repentance towards God, taught and testified also faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. But it is now high time to enter on this second lesson—a lesson of greatest preciousness. We must be brief in our exposition of it; but let us at the same time be as plain as possible. It is not a lesson that can be set forth advantageously in the wisdom of man's words; nor is it the way of securing its acceptance, that it should be garnished with human eloquence, or made the subject of any tasteful and high-wrought description for the entertainment of the human fancy—when the weight of its own eternal importance should be enough to recommend it, to the attention and the consciences of men. Let us speak to your experience. If laden with debt so enormous and so overwhelming, that the industry of a whole life could work out no sensible abatement of it—if the wages of the day did not even suffice for the expenditure of the day, so that the longer you lived, the claims which justice had against you became every day heavier than before—if thus crushed under a load of accumulating obligations, with no prospect of relief or of escape from them—We ask you to conceive, with what heart or what alacrity, you could address yourself to the labours of your daily occupation? What an unhappy doom, the doom of a weary, heartless, heavy laden existence—overtasked—overtoiled—pressed above strength and beyond measure, and yet every day becoming a poorer man than before—the spirit sunken under the consciousness of increasing debt, and the body exhausted by ceaseless and sore drudgery—the whole proceeds of his industry torn from his hands by the gripe of creditors, who, in spite of all their exactions, can yet exhibit at every week or every month's end a deadlier count and reckoning than before. How vain to tell that man, to put forth more strength, or give more time or more diligence to the business of his calling—with such a mountain weighing upon him. There is positively no encouragement in any of these circumstances to industry at all. The heart is made heavy; the hand is slackened; and the whole man powerless and paralysed, gives himself up to the apathy and indolence of despair. And yet there is a method by which this wretched and undone being, might be charmed and evoked into a life of activity; and an inspiring energy be put into his heart, that would absolutely make a new creature of him. If that debt were but cleared away—if a kind and able friend were to take it upon himself, and pay the last farthing of it—if a full and free discharge were put into his hand; and he, over and above, were gifted with the means of entering on a walk of sure profit, where, with care and industry on his part, he could make certain of a competency to himself and a rich inheritance to his family—Who does not see that, on the moment of being restored to hope, the man is restored to willing and active exertion also? Who does not see, that when this weight is lifted off, the man goes forth in all the vigour and alacrity of his now emancipated powers—reanimated to industry, because now unshackled from all his encumbrances, and with the prospect of a sufficiency and an independence now set before him?

And thus, (God grant that you may not only understand but believe what we say, for we now speak of the matters which belong to the very turning point of a man's salvation) and thus is the debt between us and our Lawgiver in Heaven cleared away. The great surety for sinners took it all upon Himself. God laid

on Him the iniquities of us all; and He became sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That we might be freed from the curse of the law, did the only beloved Son of God become a curse for us; and on the accursed tree, did He bear the full weight of the condemnation and the penalty, that we else should have borne. He was stricken for our iniquities. He was smitten for our transgressions. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him; and, in bowing Himself down to the burden of a world's atonement, did He pour out his soul even unto the death for us. In that hour of darkness and mystery, when the great lawgiver wakened the sword of vengeance against His fellow—then it was that our debt was paid to the last farthing; for then it was, that the Captain of our salvation, drunk to its last dregs that cup which the Father had put into His hands. Then it was, that our discharge was fully made out; and, hearken to us—if ye believe not these tidings of great joy, you remain listless or alienated or heavy laden as before; but oh the power and victory of faith! what a mountain is lifted off by it, and how the sinner's soul breaks forth as if into a land of light and love and liberty, when, enabled to lay hold on Christ, the discharge is put into his hands, and he now rests in the assurance that all is clear with God. And there is a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt; for He not only made an end of transgression but He brought in an everlasting righteousness. Mark the distinctness of these two parts of salvation.—The mere blotting out of your sins might have rescued you from Hell; but, alone and of itself and without something more, it would have given you no part of the inheritance that has been purchased for you in Heaven. It might have shut against you the gate of Hell, because ransomed from that awful and everlasting prison house; but it would not have opened the gate of Heaven, that the ransomed of the Lord might enter in. But, blessed be God's eternal Son, He has finished the work which was given Him to do. He has not been satisfied with doing it by halves. He has made out for us a complete salvation. He has not only suffered, but He has served for us; and, instead of leaving us midway between Hell and Heaven, He has done more than redeem us from the one, by His own full endurance of the penalties of that law which we had broken—He has earned for us the reward of a sure and blissful inheritance in the other, by His own perfect obedience to all the precepts of that Law, which He has magnified and made honourable. Now, observe the whole extent of that relief and that enlargement which He has procured, for all who accept of Him as He is offered in the gospel. There is not only put into their hands, a discharge from that debt which He has paid for them; but there is put into their hands, a title-deed of entry into that glorious and everlasting inheritance, which He has won for them. It were not enough, that, disburdened from debt, you were then left as if to start fair and work out for yourselves the rewards of eternity. Who does not see, that, ere one day rolled over your heads, you would again fall short of the commandment—again dishonour that law, which utterly refuses to dishonour itself, by letting down the standard of its own absolute perfection—again run a new score, as it were, of debt and of deficiency—again become a wretched outcast of condemnation; haunted as before by the perpetual consciousness of your own imperfection; and having no rest to the soles of your feet, because still without any solid foundation of peace or confidence in God. And be assured that you never will know what it is to be fully and firmly at rest—all, as heretofore, will be misgiving and perplexity and despair, till relieved from the task of establishing a righteousness of your own. That was the old stumbling-block of the Jews; and it will prove a stumbling-block to you also, if you set out on the imagination, now that Christ has delivered you from Hell by His sufferings, you will earn a right to Heaven by your own services. You must look to Christ for both. You have as much need of the services of Christ for the one, as you have of the sufferings of Christ for the other. You can no more work out a righteousness for yourselves, than you can work out a redemption for yourselves; and accordingly we read of Christ being made unto us right

eousness as well as redemption. If you obtain a discharge from Hell, it is not because you have paid the debt; but because Christ hath paid it for you—if you obtain a right of entry into Heaven, it is not because you have performed the requisite obedience; but because Christ hath performed it for you. In a word, you must look for Heaven, not as the wages of your own righteousness, but, alone and altogether, as the wages of the righteousness of Christ. For your deliverance from the coming wrath, trust to the sufficiency of His atonement—for your participation in that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, trust to the sufficiency of His righteousness.—And, in answer to the frequent question of the ignorant or the half-informed in the nature of the gospel, who, after the matter is explained thus far are often heard to ask, have we no further concern then with a work of righteousness ourselves; or have we no more to do with the law of God? No more to do with it, as a covenant of works. Nothing whatever to do with it, on the old footing, and under the old legal economy of Do this and live. Absolutely nothing at all to do with it, in the way of building up a plea, a meritorious plea, on which you might challenge a place in the kingdom of Heaven, or put in a claim for it that shall avail against the judgment of a righteous God. Nothing to do with it, in the purpose and on the principle of deserving Heaven for yourselves; but, mark us well, every thing to do with it in the purpose and on the principle of pleasing Him who has deserved Heaven for you.

Christ now stands in the place of the law; and, to use the image of the apostle, you, dissevered from the law, your old husband, are married to another, even Christ; but for what end?—that you may bring forth fruit unto God. Your obedience is as indispensable as before; but then it fulfils a different office from what it should have done before. The purpose of your obedience now, is, not to make you meet in law—Christ has settled all its accounts for you—but the purpose of your obedience now, is, to make you meet in person, or meet in character, for Heaven; that you may become like-minded with those who are already there—with God the Father—with Christ, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—with the unfallen angels, who still retain that resemblance to their Maker in which they were created—with the spirits of just men made perfect, who had lost this resemblance, and were again renewed in righteousness and holiness. And this renewal we must all undergo also. To become the members of Heaven's family, we must acquire the family likeness of Heaven. It is said of Heaven, that it is the land of uprightness; and to be admitted there, you must become upright. It is said of Heaven, there thy servants serve thee; to be admitted there, you must become the servants of God. It is said of Heaven, that nothing which defileth can enter there; and you to be qualified for that entrance, must cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and your holiness must be perfected. It is said of Heaven, that its rejoicing inhabitants cease not day nor night to glorify the Father and the Son, insomuch, that the high arches of the upper sanctuary ring with jubilee, and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions; and you, to participate in the joys and the exercises of that blissful land, must have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and learn in spirit and in truth to worship Him.—Finally, it is said of Heaven, that there charity never faileth; and you, to be qualified for sitting down in its celestial company, must know what it is to have a heart that feels for all, and a hand in readiness to succour and to serve all. Justification, so far from being the whole of your Christianity, is but the beginning of it; and so far from Christianity having nothing to do with Sanctification, which is the entire conformity of your heart and life to the law, this sanctification is the great design, the great end of Christianity—the main purpose for which Christ died, even to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. For this object you put yourselves into the hand of the Saviour, and he puts into your hands a busy work of obedience, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." You do not renounce service in passing from the law to the gospel. You only change the principle

of the service; and serve now, not with the oldness of the letter, but with the newness of the spirit. The difference is as great, as between the reluctant submission of a slave, and the prompt and cheerful obedience of a friend and of a freedman. There is a felt security which you had not before; for now you know that the all-powerful Mediator is upon your side. There is a strength which you had not before; for now there is a spirit given to help your infirmities, on which you cannot too certainly depend, and which you cannot too confidently pray for. There is a love which you had not before; for now faith has opened a fountain of gratitude in the heart; and you, believing the love that God has to you, love Him back again. There is an alacrity and a good-will that you had not before; for now God makes you willing in the day of His power—working in you to will, as well as to do of His good pleasure. There is a delight, a spontaneous and Heaven-born delight in the service of God which you had not before; for now He puts the law into your inward part, or, in other words, He enlists your affections and your taste on the side of obedience—so that what before was a weariness, or a drudgery, or a galling bondage, becomes your meat and drink, a congenial and much-loved employment. You serve God because you love Him. You do His will because you delight to do Him honour.

SERMON XVIII.

The immediate Reward of Obedience.

"In keeping of them there is great reward."—PSALM xix. 11.

You will observe the Psalmist does not say in these words, that *after* the keeping of the commandments there is great reward—but that *in* the keeping of them there is great reward; and the lesson which we mean to urge from this is, that, altogether beside any future recompense which may be annexed to obedience, there is in the very work of obedience a present recreation. The reward spoken of in the text, is the pleasure which lies in the service of God now; and not in the payment which is judicially made for it afterwards. It is the instantaneous delight which springs up in the heart, at the moment of well-doing; and not any subsequent delight which may have been affixed to it, under the existing economy of nature or Providence. And whether this be sustained as the meaning or not in the verse that is before us—it is at least a meaning which fully accords both with experience and the doctrine o scripture. "O how I love thy law," marks a present gratification in the keeping of it; and so does the passage, that, "I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of such testimonies; and so, indeed, in the one from which our text is taken, there is most distinct affirmation, not of a future reward from our observation of God's will, but of an immediate joy. The statutes of the Lord are spoken of not merely as right, but as rejoicing the heart, as more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold; and sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb—all marking a sweetness and a satisfaction in the work of virtue itself, apart from any coming good that may accrue from the performance of it—a current, and not a consequent gratification, wherewith the spirit is regaled in the very midst of the deeds and desires of righteousness: just as the eye is regaled on the instant by sights of beauty, or the ear by that melody which falls upon it.

In the prosecution of this discourse we shall first endeavour, shortly to state what the ingredients are of the present reward, which there is in the keeping of the commandments: And secondly, to state the nature of that future reward

which cometh after the keeping of the commandments; and of what importance it is to the real worth and character of our obedience, that we should have right apprehensions of this. We shall then, in a very few words of practical application, advert to the way in which the economy of the gospel bears upon this whole question.

This immediate joy which there is in the keeping of God's law, might be resolved, we think, into two leading ingredients. The first is the happiness that flows direct, from the sense of doing or having done what is right. It proceeds from the testimony of an approving conscience. It lies in the satisfaction wherewith the ear of the inner man listens to the inward voice, when it speaks in the accents of complacency. This was ground of rejoicing to the mind of an apostle. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." It is not a rejoicing that springs altogether from the hope of reward; or because, on the recollection of a past integrity or a past charity or a past self-denial, there is founded the anticipation of a future blessedness. There is a blessing in the recollection itself. It is precious on its own account. It drops as it were an immediate elixir upon the soul. A good conscience is a present as well as a perpetual feast; and there is a felt and present solace, in the taste and flavour of that hidden manna which it administers. It affords something more than a clear medium, through which we might see a coming reward on the distance that lies before us. In the very clearness itself, there is the enjoyment even now, of sweetest sunshine; and the pleasure of a good conscience no more consists alone in the hope of a future remuneration, than the pain of a bad or an accusing conscience consists alone in the dread of a future vengeance. There is in remorse a present agony, that is distinct from fear. There is in the answer of a good conscience a present satisfaction, that is distinct from hope; and this forms one ingredient of that reward, which lies even now in the keeping of the commandments.

But there is still another ingredient. Though the acts of the hand be the outward expressions of virtue, yet they are the affections of the heart which constitute its real and primary essence. Insomuch that the love of God is said to be the first and greatest of the commandments; and all those commandments that have for their object the good of our fellowmen, are said by the apostle to be briefly comprehended in this saying—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now in the play and exercise of love, there is instantaneous joy. Love is not merely acted on as a principle—it is felt as an emotion; and, save when it strays from duty or is checked by disappointment, it is a pleasurable emotion. More especially is it so, and that in great est pureness and ecstacy, when it goes forth in rejoicing confidence towards God—when the heart of the creature rises to the Creator, in trust and in tenderness—when it can look to the Being who made it as a Friend; and throw back the willing regards of gratitude upon Him, for those kind and fatherly regards that He ever casts on His acceptable worshippers—when from gratitude it rises to esteem, and eyes with delighted admiration the gracefulness and the glory which sit on His revealed countenance—when on the aspect of the Divinity, seen without disturbance and without dread, are beheld both the mildness and the majesty of worth—and above all when He stands forth in the charms of His unspotted holiness; and at once transports and solemnizes the soul of him, whom, whether by the eye of Faith or the eye of vision, He admits to see the moral radiance that encircles His throne. There is in all this a beautitude of which no adequate utterance can be given. It is, in truth, the very beautitude of Heaven above; and may be realised, though in fainter degree and at broken intervals, upon earth below. There be a saintly and a select few, who, at times, even on this side of the grave, have attained to such mysterious elevation; and who also, after they have ascended from the heights of a more ethereal sacredness, feel, in the perennial sense of God's reconciled presence, a gladness which is also perennial. If there be not at all times a seraphic ecstacy, there is at most times a seraphic calmness in their spirits. They have a peace which the world knoweth not and are not troubled as other men, in

their midway passage between them and Eternity. There is at least a foretaste of the coming joy; and if love to God be indeed shed abroad in their hearts, it is even now the experience of their hearts, that, in the keeping of the first and greatest commandment, there is indeed a very great reward.

But we shall speak more to the intelligence of the general world, if we exemplify the truth of the text, by the second great affection that is required of us in the gospel, even the love of our neighbour. In the keeping of this commandment too, there is a great reward. We do not insist on the constitutional delight which many have in the mere activities of benevolence, or on the gratification that is thereby afforded even to our taste for employment; or on that enjoyment which is felt by every philanthropist, when made hopeful or happy by the success which has attended his prosperous management of human nature. This last is rather a reward that cometh after our plans and performances of well-doing, than one which intermixes with the prosecution of them. But what is more to the truth of our principle, is the pleasure which is lighted up in the heart on the first instant of its felt kindness towards any creature that breathes—that no sooner does the play of cordiality begin there, than there commences along with it a play of purest and most satisfying enjoyment—that there is delight in the original conceptions of Benevolence, and delight also in all its out-goings—that whereas malignity and envy and anger do rankle the bosom, gratitude and goodwill and all the benign affections of our nature do rejoice it, being fraught with a double blessing, and demonstrating the lesson of our text by that ample share of it, which cometh to the giver, and which consists in the happiness that redounds to himself from the wish and the effort to make others happy. When the heart is thus attuned, it is then that it tastes of the very truth and substance of enjoyment—it is then that the mechanism of our sentient nature moves sweetly; and that, in the mere concord of its feelings and faculties, there is unutterable joy. It is then that the soul is in its wholesome and well-conditioned frame; and indeed, from the very beaming that plays on the human countenance, we may gather how when there is kindness within there is comfort within. The inner man feels, that when breathing in the element of love, he is breathing in an element of light and cheerfulness; and that the happiest mood of the spirit, is when it blandly and bounteously devises for another's welfare. The selfishness by which it of old was actuated, is now felt to have been a weight and a confinement upon its energies—from which when released, it seems as if it had just gotten its native elasticity; and so could forthwith expatiate on a field, where there was room and liberty and a genial atmosphere. It is almost as if a stricture upon its faculties had been taken off—and it was now restored to alacrity, because its own proper force and freedom had been restored to it. Certain it is, that, both in the feelings and the outflowings of human sympathy, there is a satisfaction which not only blesses our companionships on earth, but which we shall bear with us to the choirs of Paradise; and that, beside the goodwill which radiates from Heaven's throne and is reflected back again to Him who sitteth thereon, there is a goodwill which passes and repasses in busy circulation among all the members of Heaven's family. Now of this we have a present foretaste, of which even the most unsaintly and unregenerate of this world can be made to understand. For God, hath not only, to bind together a perpetual society in Heaven, established there the charity that never faileth—but, even for the temporary purposes of our frail and fleeting society on earth, hath spread the many thousand charities of home and of neighbourhood even among the men of our ungodly generation. And even to them we can confidently appeal for the truth, that, in the grovelling pursuits whether of sense or avarice, they never experienced so true a delight, as in those moments when their spirit was touched into sympathy with other spirits than their own. There is many a scene of domestic tenderness on which this principle is fully manifested; and whence we may gather what that is, in which, after all, the real happiness of our nature lies. It is most certainly more in the play of kindness to others, than in the secreting

or securing of any animal enjoyment to ourselves. In the walks of merchandise men are to be found, who, among the noblest specimens of all that virtue which mere nature has to boast of, can, upon their own remembrance of their own feelings, give the same testimony—who perhaps recollect a time, when, on the sad occasion of a neighbour's bankruptcy, the principle on which we now insist was brought to the trial of their own observation—who as they sat in judgment over the fortunes of a fallen family, were visited with the kindlings of a mercy that rejoiced against judgment and prevailed above it—who could have exacted all, but, in a moment of relenting generosity, there was a gentle force upon their spirits which would not let them; and, in virtue of which, they felt and they forgave.—We ask, if, in the tenderness and in the triumph of that moment, there was not ample compensation made for all which they surrendered; or if all the money which they made over with their hands, could have purchased one fraction of the delight that they had from the mercy which then glowed in their bosoms?

But we can no longer afford to multiply these illustrations; and we trust that it will now appear abundantly manifest, how, in the exercise of love to our fellows there is a moral, even as, in the exercise of Love to our God, there is a spiritual gladness; and how likely it is therefore, that when the one is blended with the other, or rather when the one either originates or issues from the other, there is in the keeping of the second, as well as of the first law, a very precious and withal a present reward.

There is not a single virtue, when looked to in its own independent aspect, of which the same thing might not be affirmed. They one and all of them yield an immediate satisfaction to the wearer. There is a certain untroubled serenity in truth and in justice—there is a felt and native dignity in honour—in perfect keeping with this, there is a quiet and secure resting-place to the inner man in gentleness and humility—there is, we shall not say a proud, but at least a triumphant complacency in all the virtues of self-command—there is a cheerfulness to the spirit in the temperance of the body—there is in purity such a peace as well as transparent beauty and loveliness, that it is like breathing in the third Heavens instead of this world's gross and troubled atmosphere, when, under the guardianship of strictest delicacy, the heart becomes that hallowed abode, in which no wrong or tainted imagination is permitted to dwell. These and all the other moralities of the human character, are what make up the true health and harmony of the soul. They are the very streams or materials of that well, which is struck out in the bosom of regenerated man, and which springeth up there unto life everlasting. They are those fruits of the spirit which are sweet unto the taste, and which constitute the food and the sustenance of eternity. The crown that is given in paradise to the possessor of these, is neither of gold nor of silver; for these in truth are the very graces, of which the crown and all its glory is composed. It is a moral splendour that is lighted up there. It is virtue which blooms and is immortal there. It is the felt pleasure that they have in goodness here, though with a sad mixture and mitigation of earthliness—this is the very feeling which is transported along with the spirits of the good to Heaven, and constitutes the very essence of Heaven's blessedness. Nevertheless, and amid all the obscurations of our earthly nature, we have the feeling even on this side of death; and, such as it is, it forms that present reward which there is in the keeping of the commandments.

II. Now, instead of the reward which there is *in* the keeping of the commandments, let us conceive that there had been a reward *after* the keeping of the commandments, and not only so, but that it is quite distinct from that enjoyment of which we have now spoken and which lies directly and essentially in the obedience itself. Instead of a happiness that resides natively, or that comes forth immediately, out of the holiness—let it be thought of for a moment, as a happiness that has been arbitrarily and by divine appointment annexed to holiness. This can easily be imagined—a Heaven in which there may be the delight that belongs to virtue, but which is also peopled with other charms—where there

are sights of loveliness, and sounds of sweetest harmony—where beside the recreation that there is to the glorified spirit, there is also a recreation to the glorified senses; and the pleasures even of taste and intellect are superadded, to the ecstasies of a saintly and seraphic devotion—a Heaven of space and splendour and full security from ought that can pain or can annoy; and whose very exemption from the sufferings of a hideous and everlasting hell, is enough to call out the desires of all men towards it. Now we can well suppose, that the one ingredient of its sacredness may be lost sight of, in the multitude of those other ingredients which compose the felicity of such a Paradise as this—or, at all events, that it is not the sacredness but something else, which gives the practical urgency to our efforts and desires after such a habitation. And, so if it still is obedience by which we earn Heaven, while its blessedness is fancied to consist of things which are distinct from the gratification that lies in the obedience itself—then virtue becomes the work, and a something which is not virtue forms the wages. The candidates of immortality are so many labourers for hire; and Heaven is not looked to, or at least not aspired after, as a place of holiness—but as the price that is given for it.

Now this is a consideration which you do well to ponder, for it really does affect the whole spirit and character of your Christianity. It goes to the very root of the principle by which you are actuated—and will perhaps lay bare to the eye of conscience, how utterly devoid you are of that which may be deemed the very essence of religion. It is no evidence at all of the love which you have for a work, that you may have a love to its wages. Let two men go forth, upon the labour that is prescribed to them by their divine lawgiver; and it makes all the difference in the world between the one man and the other—if I shall see the first busied with the labour because of his liking it, and the second because of his looking to the remuneration that comes afterwards. A taste for the employment, is a wholly different thing from a taste for its distinct and subsequent reward. They may lie as wide of each other, as do the two elements of sordidness and sacredness; and those services, which, had they proceeded from willingness and taste, would have argued a holy creature, may in fact be nothing better than the services of a drivelling and reluctant mercenary.

We might appeal on this subject to the understanding of an ordinary workman. He knows well the distinction, between a love of the work, and a love of the payment which is made for it; and it is very possible that he has none whatever for the one, while all the regards of his heart are set upon the other. He would rather have the payment without the work, to which at the same time he submits only because he must, as to any hard and hateful necessity. He would feel it a strange proposal, should work be offered to him, and, on inquiring about the reward, should be told, that it was just more work; and that the better he did his allotted service, so much the larger would be the supply and imposition of that same service in all time coming. Were this all the encouragement a master had to give, he would soon desert the employment; or if compelled thereto, would at least feel the revolt of all his inclinations to be against it. And what we have to ask is, whether with all the compliances of your outer man, there be not the very same revolt of your inward man from the service of God—whether, as in ordinary labour the wages are given as a compensation for the weariness, so with you a deliverance from hell and an entrance upon some vague and fancied heaven, be not counted upon as the after-wages of a labour which at present and in itself you feel to be a weariness—whether the service of religion be indeed your taste, or only your task, at which now you slavishly and assiduously ply not for its own sake, but for the sake of a something else that lies in the distance before you—whether the exercises of your practical Christianity be exercises unto godliness, or in the hope to make a gain of godliness—whether it be a thing of delight or a thing of drudgery, extorted by a fear from without or excited by a feeling from within—a generous homage to the glory of the supreme lawgiver and the worth of His commandments or

but the worthles policy of a creeping and ignoble selfishness?

These are questions which go to the very soul of our religion; and by which we are now attempting to probe and to scrutinize among those hidden things of the heart, that shall at length be brought out and fully manifested in the day of reckoning. They are the questions by which the sterling and the counterfeit in Christianity may be determined. The true religiousness of a man does not hinge upon what the things be to which he is driven, but upon what the things be in which he natively and spontaneously delights. An inferior animal can be operated upon by pain and terror as well as he. It can tremble under the rod of authority, when backed with the power of enforcement, as well as he. Or it can be lured by the gratifications that are suited to its nature, as well as he. These are motives, that can be addressed with effect, to the mere element of earthliness; and, under their influence, many are the formalities of religion which might be gone through, and many are its severe and servile exactions which might be rendered, and much of its seemly exterior might be put on—as much certainly as might sustain the appearance of a goodly profession. But still the question is in reserve, if you delight in the law of God after the inward man—if the homage you give be that of willing and affectionate loyalty—if the walk you tread upon be that of a disinterested rectitude—if you have been lured into holiness by the beauty of its graces, and not by the bribery of its gains—For surely there is nought in him of the pure or the exalted or the heavenly, who labours only for the reward that cometh after the commandment, and neither feels nor understands how in the commandment there should be a great reward.

III. We may now perhaps be able to perceive, how the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in and adapts itself to the question that is now before you. It in the first instance then, releases you altogether from the law as a covenant. It tells you that you are not to work for Heaven, because that Heaven is secured to you in another way. Instead of coming forth with the stipulation of do this and live, it comes forth with the offer of eternal life to you as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. One reason of this is, that God's jurisprudence requires a higher homage to be rendered to it, than can possibly be rendered by the obedience of man; and therefore it will not consent so far to honour that obedience, as to bestow upon it the rewards of eternity, on the footing of these being a due and a rightful acknowledgment. The law of God refuses to let itself down in this way to the degraded standard of human virtue; and, therefore, instead of holding out eternal life to us as the payment of our righteousness it holds out to us for the sake of the righteousness of Christ—if we will consent to receive it on this footing. It is thus that the dignity of Heaven's government is secured; and the character of God as a Sovereign is not at all compromised, by the terms of acceptance which He holds out to the guilty who have offended Him.

But this gospel economy is not more for the character of God as a Sovereign than it is for the character of man as the subject of God's will. The truth is that if you waken up the old economy of do this and live, you waken up that very spirit of bondage and of low mercenary bargaining between the two parties, which we have already endeavoured to stigmatize. Along with the fears of legality, the sordidness of legality is sure to make entrance again into the heart; and we do not see how under such a dispensation, the pursuit of holiness can be disencumbered from the mixture of such ignoble motives, as would make the pursuit a selfish and an unholy one. There is no access, in such very peculiar circumstances as these—there is no access to a sinner's heart for the love of holiness in itself, but by making him the free offer of Heaven as an unconditional gift; and at the same time making him understand, that it is in truth holiness and nothing else, which forms the very essence of Heaven's blessedness.

On this footing let there be a will come on the part of men, and there is a welcome on the part of God. There is no let or hindrance whatever, between the sinner and the mercy-seat. You have not to work for acceptance, but the signal of acceptance is even now held

out to you; and, instead of winning the favour of God by your holiness, this favour smiles upon you now, and if you will only put yourself in its way, it will, as its first and very greatest expression, put the principle of holiness within you. O! then be persuaded to close with this free and transforming gospel. "Turn unto me now," says God, "and I will pour out my spirit upon you." That law, which you are now so afraid of, you will be made to love; and from a service of jealousy and constraint, it will become a service of willingness. Of that splendid Heaven whereof you have the promise, you will have a pre sent and a most precious sample, in th new tastes and new enjoyments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thi will be in fact the beginning of Heaven to your souls—the morning twilight of your happy and good eternity. In the moral gladness of your renovated nature you will have the earnest of what i coming; and, on your way through the world, will demonstrate how great the difference is between the low crouching and fearful spirit of the legal, and the li beral and generous style of the evangeli cal obedience.

SERMON XIX.

The necessity of a Personal meetness for Heaven.

"Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance o the saints in light."—COLOSSIANS i. 12.

To any man who reads a few of these verses in connection, it must be obvious that the apostle points to something more than a judicial meetness for the kingdom of Heaven—though without that redemption which is through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sin, we could never have been admitted into heaven. But to walk worthy of the Lord, and to be fruitful in every good work, and to be strengthened with all might—these also are so many ingredients of the meetness. There is a personal, as well as a judicious meetness, indispensable to our becoming partakers of the inheritance of the saints; and while there is nothing more true, than that it is by faith alone that we are justified—it is just as true, that, ere we can obtain as the fruit of our justification a place in the blessed family above, we must be sanctified by faith.

We often, in the matters of the divine administration, separate, in idea, the judicial from the personal meetness of heaven; and we lay an inferior stress upon the latter, while we count the former to be indispensable. What helps us to do this, is the arbitrary connection which obtains between a punishment and a crime in civil society. A violent temper, for example, is its own punish ment; and the misery which it inflict by its own working, may be regarded a the natural and necessary effect of th temper itself. But it may further urg the man who is under its power to th transgression of an assault upon hi neighbour, for which by the law of hi country he is put into confinement. B being thus detached from society, he i certainly restrained for the time from similar act of violence against another and even when sent back from his im prisonment, the fear of its recurrenc may restrain him, from giving vent i extravagant conduct at least to the ou rageous feelings which swell and tumul tuate in his bosom. The object of peac and protection to the community i gained by this proceeding. But there i nothing done by it to mollify the man' temper. There may be something don to repress the outbreakings of mischie but nothing done to purify or to dry up th source. The man may still continue t fester, and to be agitated, and to sustai all the miseries of a fierce internal wa So that even though the civil punish ment were remitted; though by the pay ment of a ransom on the part of anothe

we obtained a full discharge from the penalties of the law—there are other penalties annexed by nature to the moral infirmities of his character, from which the law can obtain for him no deliverance whatever. It may take off the sufferings which itself put on; but from the sufferings which essentially attach to the constitution of his heart, it cannot save him. It cannot save him from the misery of his own boisterous and ungovernable temper. It cannot save him from the wretchedness of being driven, and pursued, and agonised, by the fury and the disorder of his own passions. After it has done its uttermost in the way of relieving him from the burden of every legal chastisement—after it has reversed its sentence, and made it pass into a sentence of justification—after it has pronounced on him in such a way, that, forensically and in the eye of the law, he is a righteous person—after it has snatched him from the hand of its own executioners—There may be the vengeance of an executioner within, who never ceases from the cruelty of his applications. The factitious distress which the law lays on, the law also can lift off. But there is a natural and necessary distress appended by a law of our moral constitution to the character, and which will remain so long as the character remains. And in the heat and violence of an anger, which restraint may confine, but which restraint can never extinguish—in the conflict and fermentation of passions, which live and burn and fluctuate within the brooding chambers of his own heart—in the affronted pride, and the unquelled resentment, which are at all times ready to burst forth on the fancied provocation of his fellow men—May this unhappy criminal, assoilzied and justified and set free from the arbitrary impositions of the law, still feel the burden of a curse from which there is no escaping—and of a punishment, that, in the language of Cain, is heavier than he can bear.

There is we have every reason to believe both an arbitrary and a natural ingredient in the punishment of hell. We are apt to look only to the former, and to overlook the latter. There is no natural connection between moral guilt and the application of intense heat to the material part of our constitution. But still it is the heat, the flame, the fire and brimstone, the everlasting burnings—which chiefly appal the fancy, and engross the fears of the inner man, when he thinks of the place of condemnation. Now it is very true, that, by a bare act of justification, we may be delivered from all that is gross and corporeal in these torments.—The fire may cease to burn, and the body may cease to be agonised. But if the character remain, the misery it entails on the moral constitution will also remain. A mere deed of acquittal will never work out a deliverance from this misery. There is no new arrangement made known to us in the gospel, by which God has dissolved the alliance between love and enjoyment on the one hand, or between hatred and wretchedness on the other. He has made no change, either on the character or on the tendency of what is right and wrong.—Virtue is as inseparable from happiness as before; and vice as inseparable from misery as before. The economy of grace, made known to us in the New Testament, has no more broken up the connection between benevolence and pleasure, or between malignity and pain in a man's heart—than it has broken up the connection between the sight of beauty and an emotion of pleasure, or between the sight of deformity and an emotion of disgust. So that, if, by a solitary deed of justification, a believer could be delivered from the fire of hell, and at the same time were to remain in character and affection just what he was—a portion of the feeling of hell would still adhere to him. His body may be at ease from all that is painful, in respect of physical sensation; but his mind, in respect of all that is painful in moral sensation, may be the seat of a torment as unrelenting as ever. All that is mainly and essentially hell may still be attached to his person, without respite and without mitigation.—Let pride come into collision with contempt; and disdain meet with equal disdain; and hatred exchange its mutual glances, from one unregenerated being to another; and remorse shoot its arrows across this dark scene of moral turbulence and disorder; and suspicion and envy and discontent rankle in the hearts of creatures, fired with hostility towards

God and against each other—these, though not one sensation of agony were permitted to reach their bodies, are enough to make a hell, out of any habitation of assembled criminals. These form the sharpest inflictions of the worm that dieth not, and the fiercest materials of the fire that is not quenched. The man who has these unsanctified feelings in his heart, carries the elements of hell about with him. He has only to die, and to descend with his unrenewed passions into that place, where all who have not been born again have gone before him. It is then that he enters into hell. In respect of the material ingredients of the torture, it is certainly conceivable that he may be saved by being justified. But in respect of the moral ingredients of the torture, the passions themselves must be extricated from his bosom, and to be saved he must be sanctified.

So it is not enough, you will perceive, to obtain a man's translation from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven, in order to translate him from the misery of the one abode to the happiness of the other. A great part of the misery of the former, consists in the sufferings, which, by the unrepealed law of moral and sentient nature, are attached to vicious and unholy propensities. And a great part of the happiness of the latter, consists in the enjoyments, which, by the same law are attached to kind and good and holy affections. So that to have the full advantage of an inheritance among the saints, there must be a meetness of character; and for this purpose, to have the sinner turned into a saint, is just as essential as to have a deed of acquittal made out—or a sentence of justification passed upon him.

Let us first direct your attention for a little longer to the first of those receptacles; and, however painful the imagery associated with such a contemplation may be, the importance of the lesson must be held as our apology. We are not to overlook the penal character of those sufferings, which are endured in the prison-house of the damned; and we have every reason to believe, that intense bodily pain forms one ingredient of this bitter and ever-during agony. But there are other ingredients; and, to prove how these of themselves are enough to bring a heavy load of wretchedness on the ac cursed, we ask you to think of the hor rors of an unregulated jail—where bodily pain may be conceived to have no place —where, if you choose, there is no dis ease, and the wretched inmates are re strained by the terrors of the discipline from acts of violence on each other. Le corporeal suffering be detached from this abode of criminals, as an element o wretchedness altogether. Still there are other elements, which, working in their hearts with unchastened violence, may beget such a mental wretchedness—as to make it the most expressive way of characterising this scene of confinement, to call it a hell upon earth. There may be mutual rage and mutual revilings.—There may be the misery of revenge unsatiated, or of revenge venting itself in keenest execrations. There may be the uproar of bacchanalian levity, mingled with all that is blasphemous in language and all that is fierce or unhallowed in desire. There may be passion, whether sordid or malicious, raising a tempest in the soul before its gratification; or leaving after it the bitterness of remorse.—There may be the unbridled selfishness of beings—each clamouring for his own object, and only uniting in one cry of daring and desperate rebellion against heaven's law. You have only to stamp immortality on these creatures, in order to have a hell; and though you were to open the prison door and loose them from confinement, each would carry away with him his own portion of hell. You may travel them from one end of the world to the other—yet would not these accursed beings, thereby escape the sufferings of what is mainly and essentially hell. You may even transport their persons into what is locally heaven; and yet, recoiling as they would from what that is which forms the enjoyment of its indwellers, they would still continue to be haunted by the substantial wretchedness of hell. These are miseries from which no change of place, and no sentence of justification, can deliver them. These are ills from which they cannot be saved, by a mere act of transference from one abode to another.—There must be an act of transformatio

from one character to another; or, in other words, if faith be to save them from these, they must be sanctified by faith.

But, without going for illustration to the outcasts of exile and imprisonment, the very same thing may be exemplified in the bosom of families. It is not necessary that pain be inflicted on bodies by actions of violence, in order to make up a wretched family. It is enough that pain be made to rankle within every heart, by means of the affections of violence. Out of the elements of malignity, and suspicion, and hatred, and unfaithfulness, and disgust—an abode of enjoyment may be turned into an abode of intensest suffering. A house upon earth, from the mere operation of moral causes, may be turned into hell. The fiercest ingredients of the place of torment, may brood and break out in the dwelling-places of the unregenerate in the world. So that though the material element of fire were altogether expunged from the future arrangements of nature and of providence—yet God has other elements, which he can wield to the eternal wretchedness of those who disobey him. There are other agonies which share the work of vengeance in that lake, that is represented as burning with fire and brimstone. Our own passions will be to Him the ministers of hottest indignation; and to be saved from these, it is not enough that we be justified in our persons—there must be a meetness impressed on our characters, and to be saved we must be sanctified.

It is true, at the same time, of many a worldly man—that he may be comparatively a stranger to the fiercer malignities of our nature; and that he may not, therefore, carry to the place of his destination the torture which these are calculated to inflict upon him. But it is at least true of every man, who is not born of the Spirit of God—that he loves the creature more than the Creator. Let him carry this unsanctified affection with him to his grave. Let the desires of flesh and blood remain unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, at that period when death lays him prostrate like a fallen tree upon the ground. Let it be true, that as the tree falleth so it lies; and that when he rises again, he rises with this idolatrous affection in the full vigour of carnal and unsubdued nature. On the great day of manifestation, let the utter worthlessness of such a propensity, be laid open to his now awakened conscience; and let the shame and everlasting contempt of a preference so sordid, follow him to his assigned habitation. Let him be made to see that there adheres to his character, the guilt of having cast his God away from him; and the folly of having forsaken the fountain of unperishable good, and chosen for his eternity the wretched employment of feeding upon ashes. Let the eye of infinite rectitude be felt to be turned upon him as an eye of rebuke; and let him know himself to be a worthless outcast from the great family of holiness. These are sufficient of themselves to make out the sting of an undying worm, whether a weight of corporeal agony be added or not to the weight of these agonising reflections. In these, there is enough of the elements of disquietude to give to hell an unsupportable bitterness; and to be saved from these, it will not suffice that his name be expunged from the book of condemnation. It will not suffice that a sentence of justification be attached to his name. A real process of crucifying him unto the world, and making him alive unto God, must be attached to his person. Or, in other words—in virtue of an eternal ordination by which misery of feeling is ever attached to worthlessness of character, there is a misery attached to every depraved creature, to be saved from which, his depravity must be done away, and he must be sanctified.

This might be rendered still more evident, by our directing your attention, in the second place, to heaven, and to the essential character of that blessedness which is found in it. But enough that we distinguish between that part of the punishment of hell, which is arbitrarily attached to sin, and that part of it which is necessarily and naturally attached to sin. It may be seen from this how little a mere unaccompanied deed of justification can do for us—if it only deliver us from the material fire of the place of condemnation. It will be seen, that, even were the fire extinguished, there would, in every unregenerate bosom, be moral elements at work, to constitute an undying worm, which would never cease to

torment us by its corrosions—that, to be delivered from the torture and the fury of these elements, the elements themselves must be extinguished; or, in other words, we must be delivered from all the passions and all the propensities of ungodliness. We must be delivered from the whole train of dark, and malignant, and worldly affections, which the apostle denominates the works of the flesh. We must be delivered from all that is opposite either to the first or to the second commandment of the law. God, in fact, must make that new covenant with us, by which He gives us clean hearts, and creates within us right spirits. In other words, it is not enough that there be a forensic deed of justification. There must be a personal transformation of character; and faith cannot save us from that which forms the mighty burden of a sinner's curse—but through the sinner being sanctified by faith.

SERMON XX.

The connection between Singleness of Aim and Spiritual Discernment.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—MATTHEW vi. 22.

THERE is a great demand among certain religionists, for clear and simple views of the gospel. And, to make this good, they often fasten upon some one truth or object in the field of revelation, to which they look singly and exclusively; and as if it alone were representative of all Christianity, or comprehensive of all. They seem to have confounded singleness of eye, with the singleness of the object which the eye fastens upon; and to have understood our Saviour as if He meant to describe the state of the object, when He was describing the state of the organ. Now it is with the mental as it is with the corporeal eye. In a pure and right state of the latter, it is not one thing only which is seen, but all the things which are on the field of vision—the trees, and the houses, and the various objects, which make up a complex and extended landscape. It would mark a disease, and not a perfection, in this organ—were its power of beholding restricted to one thing only. And the same is true of the spiritual landscape—of the Bible that tablet of revelation, on which are spread out the doctrines and the informations of a voluminous record. It would argue no perfection in the seeing faculty of the mind, were it awake only to one of these doctrines while blind or undiscerning to all the rest. Did its singleness consist in the oneness of the thing which it saw, so that all the other things both new and old of scripture were unheeded or unobserved by it—this surely were an impotency or a defect, instead of an excellency in the mental eye. Instead of the whole body being full of light, there would be a partial and distorted view of Christian truth; and for the largeness and variety of heaven's own communication, we should be wholly taken up with some shibboleth of a party some solitary principle or point of narrow sectarianism.

We may be sure then that the singleness of eye, in our text, is something different from any straitening of this sort; and by which, in fact, illumination were obstructed, rather than let forth in all its fulness and expanse upon the understanding. This singleness of eye refers not to the number of truths which might be presented to the contemplation of the intellect; nor does it signify that we should but entertain one truth, or one topic, in opposition to a multiplicity. It refers to the number of pursuits in which for various objects of desire or affection we might be practically engaged; and it signifies that we should give ourselves to one such pursuit to the exclusion of every other, or at least to the entire subordination of every other. It is called single

ness of eye, not because the eye sees but one thing; but, more properly, because it looks in one direction—having one great object after which the mind predominantly aims; and to which therefore it looks steadfastly, and constantly, and so singly. Singleness of eye in this place, denotes, not the simplicity of our intellectual regards as bestowed on some one object of theoretical contemplation, but the simplicity of our moral regards towards some one object of practical attainment. It marks the unity, and along with it, the energy of a ruling passion—for which every other passion is pressed into subserviency, or gives way altogether. It follows not because the mind hath fixed and concentred all its faculties on some one acquisition, that it must all the while confine its regards to but one truth in science or one article in theology. The navigator may have set his heart on the realizing of a discovery in some remote quarter of the globe; and with this, as his supreme or rather single ambition, he may repel every lateral temptation that would divert him on his way; and suffer neither the beauty and luxury of one region to detain him, nor the gainful merchandise of another to draw him from his course. There is here singleness of eye—yet of an eye filled and exercised with many objects of contemplation notwithstanding; and busied in the work of perpetual observation, both on the depths of the earth beneath and on the courses of the firmament above, on the compass by which he steers, on the chart by which he measures and ascertains his progress. The voyage may be said to have but one object—yet, for its proper guidance and equipment, there might be a manifold attention required, and light not from one but from many sciences. And so of the voyage to eternity, and the steadfast or singlehearted prosecution of it. The object is one; and he who is resolved upon its attainment, may evince both the strength and the simplicity of his purpose, by his universal resistance to the various solicitations, that would draw him by a thousand devious ways from the path to heaven. Yet we are not to suppose, that, because the object is one, it is but the light of one truth or one proposition which leads the way to it. To the expediting of this journey, there is use for the whole fulness and furniture of the Bible. And as its objects are various, so the mind is variously exercised—at one time with the doctrine of the sacrifice, whence it obtaineth peace—at another with the doctrine of the Spirit, whence it obtaineth strength—at a third with the doctrine of the law as a rule of life to believers, whence it obtaineth direction. In short, instead of but one truth singled out perhaps by some hair-splitting or metaphysic nicety, the manifold lights of scripture and experience conspire to shine upon his way. His eye is single, not because it looks to but one point in theology—but because intent upon the one object of a blissful immortality, or upon the one path which leads to it.

Now though, beside the single pursuit of religion, there may be specified a thousand other pursuits distinct from it and opposed to it—as the pursuit of fame, the pursuit of fortune, the pursuit of ambition, the pursuit of pleasure—yet, in the Bible, all these are generally classed together and comprehended, under the one characteristic of enmity to God and a life of godliness, of rivalship with the interests of eternity.

It is thus that the children of light and the children of this world are contrasted with each other—the meat that perisheth, with the meat that endureth—the temptations of the present evil world, with the powers of the world to come—the broad way of destruction, with the narrow path of life everlasting—the slavery of Satan, with the service of the living and true God Man is looked upon as being under the rivalry of two great forces, of but two great conflicting elements. Our text, where singleness of eye is recommended lies between one passage in which we are told to lay not up for ourselves treasures on earth but treasures in heaven, and another passage in which we are told that no man serve two masters and that he cannot serve God and mammon. This singleness stands opposed in scripture, not to multiplicity, but to doubleness. It is true that there are manifold earthly affections, any one of which might prevail to the destruction of our hopes and interests in eternity; yet they may all be regarded, in their one generic character of earthliness.

"Love not the world," says the apostle John, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." It is by wavering between these two, between the will of God on the one hand, and some worldly affection whatever that may be upon the other—that we neglect the injunction of the text, like the double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways. It is because the eye most looks to what the heart most likes, that singleness of eye is made to denote the singleness of a heart, set upon heaven and its treasures. It is because the regards of the mind are solely fixed upon that which is solely aimed after, that, by the same term, we may express that full purpose of heart, wherewith we cleave to the one master, and utterly refuse the bribes or service of the other. It is because when bent on some great pursuit, we turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, but persevere in our onward course, unseduced by any object that would lure us into by-ways—that by the singleness of eye in our text, we understand the habit of him, who, actuated by the one perpetual will to be what he ought and do what he ought, resists the very solicitation that might tempt him away from this great and unchanging principle. Singleness of eye is held equivalent to singleness of heart or of purpose—because when the regards of the heart are solely directed to the one thing needful, then the regards of the understanding are solely directed to its contemplation, and to the means of securing it. And what we have now to evince is how, such being the moral state of the purposes and affections, the intellectual state of the whole body being full of light follows from it—just as an effect does from its cause, or a consequent from the antecedent that went before it. We should like, if possible, to manifest the connection between the one and the other; and to show by what transition it is, that the man whose whole determination and desire is to make good his eternity in heaven, and who, in pursuit of this, is ready to shun or to sacrifice every object of desire that would enter into competition with it—how he comes, and in virtue of this very attitude, to move forward in an element of clearness, and to be free from the doubts and uncertainties which harass the spirits and hinder the progress of other men.

I. Now the first reason for this is very obvious, and in harmony with all experience. That which we most desire to have, we most desire to know about; or at least, to know the means of obtaining it. It is not in nature, that we should vehemently wish to possess an object, and yet be at no pains to inquire the way to it. Let a man be actuated by a strong and unceasing desire after salvation; and he will never cease to search after the way of salvation, even till he has found it. He will hearken diligently, and, as the fruit of this, his soul will at length be satisfied. The desire of his heart will set to work the faculties of his mind; and, just as in all other busy scholarship, the learning is in proportion to the labour—so will he find it the way to light and learning in the scholarship of Christianity. The more sharply set we are upon any attainment, the more surely will we give all our wits to the investigation of the process by which it may be reached; and just as the skill and intelligence are all the greater in a favourite service, than in one to which we are indifferent—so the more favourite any object of ambition is, the more exercised and awake will our attention be to all the methods by which it may be realized. Just conceive this object to be the friendship of God. Let it be the unquenchable desire of the creature, going forth in quest of the Creator. Let it be such a thirst after the living God, as to make it the supreme and most urgent appetite of his nature—Then, under its impulse, he, in the strong language of scripture, will stir himself up that he may lay hold of his Maker; he will search after Him as for hidden treasure; he will seek for Him if haply he may find Him. He will eagerly pursue after every trace and indication of the Godhead. He will seek for Him in the Bible. He will seek for Him in meditation. He will seek for

Him in prayer. He will grope as it were in every direction for the way of access; nor will he take rest to his soul, while the deeply interesting question is unsettled, wherewithal shall a sinner appear before God? It is evident that the more intense this desire, the more intense and diligent also will his search be after the object of it. And should the one become the engrossing desire of his heart, the other will become the paramount business of his life. It will be his supreme and unremitting earnestness, to seek after God. Should he at length find Him and find Him fully, there is nothing at least to surprise us in the result. It is in keeping with a law, which, in every department of attainable knowledge, holds universally. Generally speaking, in proportion to the laboriousness of the search, is the largeness of the discovery. There is nothing mysterious in this. It seems to follow in the way of natural consequence; nor should we wonder, when the heart or the eye is thus so strongly, nay so singly set on a blissful eternity, as that the whole concern is to explore the avenue which leads to it—that the fruit of such singleness of eye is the whole body becoming full of light.

Before we pass on to the next reason of this connection between the one thing and the other, let us appeal to the consciences of those who are now present on the subject of the reason which we have just given. If they hold it to be an invalid reason, can they say so on their own experience? Have they given all diligence to this great inquiry, and find that they remain in darkness notwithstanding? Have they striven with all their might after a knowledge of the things which belong to their peace, and yet abide as far from peace and from satisfying light as before? Can they appeal to the fatiguing yet fruitless toils of a most laborious and long-sustained inquiry, that has yet terminated in nothing? What have been their readings, what their importunate and persevering supplications at the door of heaven's sanctuary? How long have they kept by the attitude, or how frequently have they been found in it—of the Bible in their hands, and a prayer in their hearts that in the light of God's own revelation they may clearly see light? He holds Himself out as the rewarder of those who seek Him diligently—what we ask has been their diligence in seeking God? Do they expect to find Him without diligence; and while they are indulging in spiritual sloth, or are diligent about other even temporal things, the light of His countenance and His ways is at once to break forth upon them? They have never found; but in good truth it is because they have never sought. At least their seeking has never amounted to striving. It has been nothing like the strenuous and sustained effort of one singly bent on the good of his eternity; and giving himself, with perfect singleness of heart and of eye, to this great consummation. Day after day, the question has been postponed; and they have put off to a more convenient season the labour of its full and serious entertainment; and, in reference to the peculiar business of their eternity, to the good and the interest of their unperishable souls, their habit all their lives long has been that of a dull and languid procrastination—with now and then perhaps some fruitless sighs, some heaving yet transient and wholly unproductive aspirations. But never all the while a real taking up of the question—a real and substantial and industrious prosecution of it. They do not make a business of this inquiry at all. They do not go about it, with the plain and practical object of bringing it to a settlement. On the subject of their eternity, they acquiesce in the most vague and unsubstantial generalities; and are at no pains that it should be otherwise. Yet they complain of darkness. We tell them that they have not bestirred themselves to the search. They distrust the efficacy of a search. We tell them that they are no judges, they have never tried.

II. Our next reason, however difficult to propound, we hold to be one of main efficacy in this process. He who hath singled out and set his heart or his eye upon eternity, proves himself to be rightly impressed by the worth of eternity. He begins by a just estimate of the relation between eternity and time.

The effect of this is incalculable. It rectifies, just because it reverses all the

imaginations of nature. There is on this subject a grand practical delusion, the bane and bewilderment of our species. To our optics, time stands forth in the characters of eternity; and eternity has the insignificance of time. All our ideas of magnitude are inverted. The substance appears the shadow, and the shadow the substance. The correction of this would wholly change our mental panorama, and throw a new light over it. Let eternity and time be but seen in their just proportions; and by this alone the scenery of the future, if we may so express it, would be completely transformed. What is now the foreground, and occupies the whole field of vision, would shrink into nothing; and the new dim and shadowy ulterior would brighten into vivid interest, and expand into magnificence before us. The single rectification would introduce justness and order into the whole perspective of our being—just as the assumption of a great and true principle in science, might bring order out of confusion, and light up as it were a whole chaos of phenomena. It is only by this reference to eternity, that we can make a right survey of human existence—just as a map in geography is rightly constructed, by the references of a correct and comprehensive scale. And what a different representation do we attain of life, when we thus proceed on the high scale of eternity, to measure off all and to subordinate all—giving to each event or interest its right place, and its right proportion in reference to the whole. It would give us a similar command over a prospect in time, that the loftiest summit in the landscape gives over a prospect in space. Among the localities of the every-day world, or among the urgencies of every day life, we are alike lost in the nearness, and multitude of besetting objects; and are strangely insensible to the comparative littleness of present things, whether in space or in duration. It is by an enlargement of the view that this error is corrected—in the one case by an extended vision, in the other by an exalted faith. It is this which reduces to their proper size and importance, all temporal things. The universal error would be met by a universal correction. Could we now see to be little all that we falsely imagined to be great, and see to be great all that we falsely disregarded as little—this of itself would dissipate a world of illusions, and on this single change in the habit and perception of the mental eye, the whole body would become full of light.

And let us here make another appeal to the consciences of men. What are objects of greatest significancy and moment in their eyes? Let their eyes declare it. Let the whole drift of their thoughts and affections declare it. Does not the business of every day proceed on a constant exaggeration of things present, and as constant an extenuation of things future and eternal? It is thus that there runs a great practical illusion, through the whole system of their affairs. It may well be called a perpetual error, that has the dominion over them; and by acting perpetually upon it, their darkness thickens the more as they grow older—just like any other infatuation, which becomes the more powerful the longer it is persisted in. In the very wisdom of the secular man, there is throughout a radical fallacy—proceeding as it does on the fancied worth of that which is insignificant, on the magnitude of that which is paltry, on the endurance of that which is evanescent and perishable. The light which is in him is darkness, and how great therefore is that darkness! It envelops every thing. It distorts every thing. He sees, but it is through a false medium—so false, that even infinity is reversed into its opposite—the infinitely great Being regarded as nothing; the infinitely small absorbing every desire of the heart, and monopolising the whole field of vision. It is obvious that by the simple dispersion of this medium, the whole aspect and character of things would be changed. It would give rise to another and an opposite manifestation. It were more than the overthrow of an error. It were the subversion of a system of error—the removal of a false light, which tinged every thing and discoloured every thing. As by the hold of one right principle, we are enabled to rectify a thousand wrong conclusions—so, with but a right sense of eternity, those multiplied errors would vanish away, by which the whole of human existence is hourly and habitually infested. The grand deception of life

would be cleared away; and on this one simple change in the objects of the mind, the whole body would become full of light.

It is in things of sacredness as in things of science. There is often a virtue in one principle to cast a pervading illumination and glory over the whole field of contemplation. The subordination of the thing that is formed, to Him who formed it is such a principle—it being one of universal application, and that leaves nothing untouched, as comprehensive of all that exists, of the Creator who made all of the creature who received his all. It is therefore well said, that the fear of God is the beginning, or the first principle of wisdom. The overpassing greatness of Eternity to Time, is another such principle—it being one that affixes its character of magnitude or minuteness to every object, of wisdom or folly to every pursuit. The two, we believe, are never apart—each being implicated with the other, so that the inlet of either to the mind, were the admission of a light that should overspread the whole of its perspective. And the man who looked singly to the interest of his Eternity, laying up all his treasure there; or who looked singly to the will of his God, cleaving to him as the alone Master of his services—will experience the fulfilment of our text, the guidance of a celestial wisdom in all his doings, a glory from above shining on all his paths.

But there may be a singleness of eye either in the direction of Earth, or in the direction of Heaven; and we hold it the special aim of our text, to warn against the vacillations of those, who look at both and strive to effect a compromise between them. They would fain unite the interests of both worlds; and it will generally be found of such, that they look habitually to the one, and but occasionally to the other. Whenever the pursuit of an everlasting good is superseded by the pursuit of a merely temporal good, it has something more than a distracting, it has a darkening effect also. The mind is not only divided between an object of sense and an object of faith; but a deeper shade of concealment is thrown over the remote and unseen object. Immortality, viewed as a dogma, may be as zealously asserted as ever; but immortality, viewed as a living and substantial reality, is sadly bedimmed by every act of practical devotion to the power of things present and things sensible. It may retain its place as an article of the creed, yet without being credited—for, be the profession what it may, to the man whose affections grovel among the things of earth, heaven is but a nonentity and a name. The very desire of any worldly thing, is an homage done to the worth and magnitude of that which is temporal; and is fitted to disturb the estimate we should otherwise have formed, of the overpassing magnitude of that which is eternal. It lays us open to that most bewildering of all sophistry—the sophistry of the affections. When the choice and the judgment draw opposite ways, the judgment is at length perverted in the conflict and counteraction of the two adverse influences. The light of the understanding is, as it were, smothered under that perversity of the will by which it is constantly thwarted and overborne. The superior worth of eternity may, on occasions, be feebly recognized; but the superior worth of time is always the principle that is fully acted on. In this war of contradiction, where the conduct perpetually belies the creed, and the creed as perpetually reclaims, but without effect against the conduct, there is an augmenting and aggravating darkness—till both the power and light of conscience are extinguished, and life settles down into a system of obstinate, often irrecoverable delusion.

SERMON XXI.

The Second Coming of Christ.

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven."—Acts i. 11.

There are certain great steps, or successive periods, in the divine administration—each of which forms an era in the history of our world. The first scriptural era is from the Creation to the Flood. The second from the Flood to the call of Abraham. The third from the call of Abraham to the promulgation of the law in mount Sinai. The fourth is from the promulgation of the law to the end of the Jewish economy. And the last, within whose limits ours forms one of the many generations, is distinctly marked both by its epoch and by its close—the former by Christ's ascension from our world—the latter by His appearance in the sky, when the same Jesus who was taken up into Heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven.

It is good to connect our brief, our little day, with the roll and succession of these great changes in the spiritual jurisprudence of our species. It is elevating to look at the place which belongs to ourselves, in this magnificent progression; and it tends to sublime, to solemnize human life, as it were, above the vulgarity of its daily and familiar concerns—when thus enabled to assign the point which we occupy in the march or evolution of that great drama, which commences with the birth, and terminates with the dissolution of our world. But it does more than exalt the imagination. It serves both to inform, and powerfully to impress the conscience. It teaches what the attitude and the preparation are, which correspond to the high position that we fill, and to the high expectations that await us. Altogether its effect, or rather, perhaps, its tendency, is to abstract and to lift the soul above the dust of that earthliness in which it so habitually grovels; and, when thus mingling the calls of duty with the contemplation of the earlier and the later stages in the history of our race, we as place ourselves at the side of the saints and the righteous men of other days, and rise to a sort of kindred elevation with the ancients of inspired writ—with the holy patriarchs who have gone before us.

At none of the periods which we have now specified, did God leave Himself without a witness, or ever abandon the care and government of our species. Often as the world may have lost sight of Him, He kept by the world, and made it the busy scene both of His purposes and fulfilments. Even when the world in its blindness thought least of God, God was not sitting in the state and distance of lofty unconcern to the world; but, intent on great designs, was He directing all the springs, and presiding over all the movements of its history. And so at each term of this mighty series of changes, we behold a demonstration of the Godhead. It was so, when, moved by the wickedness that was upon the earth, He by the waters of the flood, swept off all its living generations, and left but one memorial of our race in the preservation of one family. It was so again, when mankind were again lapsing into their old forgetfulness of Himself; and He, to keep up His name and His remembrance in the midst of them, singled out another family, and threw a wall of separation around them. It was most visibly so, when He made his descent upon Sinai; and the voice of the Eternal was heard by the thousands of Israel; and the flame, and the smoke, and the thunder, gave manifest tokens of a present Deity; and the law which issued from His lips, bespoke Him to be still the Governor of men, and still the asserting Lord of His own Creation. But most of all, among these evolutions of the Supreme which are already past, have we to regard that age of miracle when the Saviour lived,

and that event of deepest mystery when He died—when, the old economy waxing away like a temporary apparatus for some greater and more enduring consummation, and a new economy emerging out of the ruins and the tremendous overthrow of the one that had gone before it, gave distinct evidence of a new and a more advanced era in the government of our world. And this brings us downward to ourselves, upon whom the latter ends of the world have come. The era in which we live has had its striking outset, and it will have its awful termination. The ascent of our Saviour begun the era—the descent of our Saviour will finish it. There is a peculiar character which such a beginning and such an ending of our dispensation give to the dispensation itself; and the question is, what are our responding duties and responding expectations?

But we must first advert to the purpose, for which Christ came into the world. You are aware of God as its Moral Governor. You are aware both of a law written on the tablet of an express revelation, and of a law written upon our hearts. You know that Law and Government and Authority are words without meaning, if not accompanied by securities and sanctions; and, more particularly, if disobeence is not to be challenged and not to be reckoned with. With these undoubted principles, and the equally undoubted fact that all had fallen short of the commandments of God—in what other light can we regard mankind, than as a revolted family? and responsible for their defection, at the bar of that rightful sovereign whose authority they had set at nought? The question at issue, was one which affected the dignity of the Lawgiver; and there were an end of all jurisdiction, if God might enact and yet not enforce, or if man might disobey and yet not incur the condemnation and the penalty. Behold then the state to which we had reduced ourselves—a state of controversy with our Maker; and on the settlement of which, His attributes and the unchangeable principles of His government were at stake. It was indeed a fearful thing for our species, when there appeared no other way of deliverance from ruin, but that which would bring dishonour on the throne of Heaven, and lay a reflection on the truth and majesty of Him who sitteth thereon. And hence the peculiar errand on which our Saviour came. It was to open wide the portals of mercy for a guilty world—yet to open them so, as to cast not an obscurity but a heightened lustre on all the other perfections of the Godhead. It was to resolve that mystery which angels desired to look into—to reconcile the honour of the law with the forgiveness of those who had broken it—and at once to heap blessings upon the head of the sinner, and to magnify all the prerogatives of the commandment that he had violated.—This was the knot of difficulty which had to be united. This was the wall of partition which had to be broken down. Or this the impassable gulph, over which there had to be thrown a high-way of communication between the rebels of our exiled world, and their offended Sovereign.

And we know, or at least we know in part, what our Saviour did and suffered to achieve this enterprise—of the descent that He made from Heaven; of the sojourn that He had on earth; of the incarnation by which He veiled the glories of His divinity, under the likeness of a man; of the preternatural conflicts, and temptations, and agonies, that He had to undergo; of His mysterious warfare with the powers of darkness; and the season of deep endurance that He had to travel through ere that victory was won, and His own arm had brought to Him salvation. A contest this, where were many spectators. The eminences of Heaven were crowned; and the darkness, and the earthquake, and the opening of graves, and the coming forth of their dead, all gave token to the big and busy importance of what was going on. It was amid these symptoms of distress in nature, that our Saviour expired; and the soul which He poured out an offering for sin, after the unknown history of a few days, re-entered the body from which it had departed; and, coming again into familiar converse with men, did He now manifest the new and the living way of access, that Himself had opened, and by which the farthest off in guilt and depravity amongst us might draw nigh unto God. And thus, having both finished the work of our reconcilia-

tion and proclaimed it, did He leave the world to the hopes and the appropriate duties of that new economy which Himself had instituted—of that new era which Himself had ushered in.

But, to complete our grounds for a practical application—let us further think of the relationship in which He now stands to the world; and of the regard which He now casts towards it; and of the interest wherewith He is now looking down, to see whether there be any consequent movement on our part, by which we might accord to the movement made upon His. When He returned to the place which He now occupies, He would be hailed by the hosts of Paradise as the Finisher of a great enterprise. It behoved to be a re-entrance of triumph, after the toils and the sufferings of an arduous undertaking; and loud and high must have been the gratulations of welcome to Him, who, travelling in the greatness of His strength over all obstacles, established a reunion, and reared a pathway of communication between Earth and Heaven. And let us only conceive, by what other and by what opposite feelings, must those of rapture and benevolent triumph have been succeeded—if, on looking to this pathway so laboriously reared, it had been found without a traveller—if, unmoved by all the signals of invitation and by all the facilities of a now provided access, the regardless world had remained as sluggish and alienated as before—if it had been found that the door of acceptance was opened in vain, and a highway of approach over the else dreary and untrodden interval was constructed in vain—and if, after the victory had been gotten, and the toil and the contest and the hazard of the great mediatorship been ended, unthankful man, in whose behalf it was all undertaken, should set it utterly at nought; and, cleaving to that world from which neither the threats of a coming judgment nor the offers of a present salvation could disengage him, he should, heedless alike of the punishment and of the pardon, stamp a nullity on all the wonders of redeeming love, and trample the Redeemer's work into utter and most affronting insignificance.

There are three distinct proprieties which belong to the condition of those who live in our present era—the era that has begun with the ascent, and that is to terminate with the descent of the Saviour. The first is a high sense of the worth of that salvation which Christ hath achieved, and which He now offers to the children of men. The second is that change of desire and affection, which is induced by our acceptance of it. And the third is that abundant righteousness of life by which the profession of Christianity is adorned, and its Author and Finisher is well pleased.

I. What an outrage is cast on the Saviour's enterprise, when, instead of being prized and sought after as a thing of worth, it is slighted, and by those too, for whom it was designed and executed, as a thing of worthlessness. The likest case to it which we can imagine, is that of a physician, who announces himself as the inventor of a sovereign remedy; and circulates at large his gratuitous offers; and rears the magnificent office, to which in crowds his suffering patients might repair; and inscribes upon its front both the freeness and the efficacy of his great specific, and in such flaming characters as might be seen and read of all men. We ask you to think of the felt mortification, if, after this parade and expectancy, not one individual should be found, who responds to the big and the blazoned overtures—if, after weeks and months of idle tarrying, no single applicant should come to the door; and all the pomp, and all the promise of this enterprise, should be utterly put to shame by the neglect of a contemptuous and unbelieving public. Is it not grievous to think, that such is the very scorn, and such the very outrage now inflicted by the world upon the Saviour!—that He, the minister of the true sanctuary, and whose office it is to wait at the tabernacle of Heaven for the approaches of all who are weary and heavy-laden, is just so put to shame!—that in lightly esteeming Christ, we virtually treat Him and all His biddings and proclamations of welcome with the cruellest derision, even the derision of our indifference and distrust?—that thus we mock the enterprise on which He came, and cause His attendant angels to blush at the sight cast by the world upon Him,

who is so oft announced in the hearing of men, as the exalted Prince and the mighty Saviour? O, let us cease to marvel, when told, that the thunders of a violated law are but as soft and feeble whispers, when compared with the vengeance of a rejected gospel; and that in the day when Jesus shall so come from heaven, in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven, that on that day, the foulest profligacy of heathen lands, shall be more mildly dealt with, than the decent ungodliness of those who have heard of mercy and have despised it.

So, we need be at no loss to comprehend the principles which are now at work in Heaven, and which will at length break forth upon the world in that awful manifestation—the wrath of the Lamb. It really need not be marvelled at, that they, who do now slumber in the depths of spiritual lethargy and unconcern, shall then be overtaken with saddest fearfulness. The provocation is quite intelligible, which will then cause the insulted dignity of Heaven to look out in characters of menace on a despairing world. We might learn from the workings of our moral nature, how it is, that, simply by living as many of you do in neglect of the Saviour, and thus despising the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, you treasure up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. You have only to look to the distinctive character of our era. The Saviour hath gone up into Heaven, and hath there taken His place as a High Priest for sinners at the right hand of God. He is there waiting on. He is marking as it were the fruit and the efficacy of his own far-sounded achievement. He is observing how the world now replies to it, and is in earnest watch for the fruit of the travail of His own soul. Like the king who hath departed into a far country, and who is afterwards to return, he hath gone to some place of absence and mystery away from our world—whence He will come again, and take account of the affairs of His government. And meanwhile He eyes from afar, how it is that His overtures have sped, and how it fares with the gospel which He left behind Him. And the unavoidable result of such a state is, that if you have received all this grace in vain—if, listless and lawless as ever, the offers of the gospel have failed to attract, even as the terrors of the broken commandment had failed to arouse you—if, sunk in profoundest apathy, you think not, and care not, of the dread alternative, that he who hath the Son hath life, and he who hath not the Son hath not life,—if the preaching of His Cross be foolishness in your ears, or at least so unproductive of influence, as to have brought no hope of Heaven into your hearts, and to have imprinted none of the character of Heaven upon your walk and conversation—if, in the busy prosecution of your own entire and unbroken earthliness, you still live at a distance from God; and, while He, by His Son, is stretching forth His hand you are disregarding—Be assured, as you would of any moral necessity, that He who went up to Heaven the gracious and inviting Saviour, will come down from Heaven the indignant judge; and, that if the intermediate season in which you now live and have your opportunity be not improved by you into the season of your redemption—it will be declared by Him on that day to have been the season in which you have sealed, with your own hands, the sentence of a final and everlasting reprobation.

One very palpable mark of your indifference to what Christ hath done, is that the report of it falls so heavily and so bluntly upon your hearing. Though proclaimed Sabbath after Sabbath—this brings no such relief, as that which captives feel when told of their coming liberty. The only exercise to which you seem at all moved by the utterance of a gospel truth, is that you recognise its orthodoxy, and so approve of it; and that without any visitation upon the soul, of the gladness and the hope and the triumph, which irradiated the walk of the primitive Christians. This is insulting to the Saviour, because it proves his salvation to be unbelieved and undervalued. It is a mortifying return for His services. He now looketh down from the eminence to which He had ascended; and it was at least a natural expectation, that the reopening of Heaven's gate upon the world, and the lifting away of those obstructions which had blocked the entrance there-

unto, would have set all in motion—that men would have testified their homage to this great enterprise, by the readiness and the rapture wherewith they accorded to it; and that thus it would have been responded to by earth's sinful families. Our pleasure in the offered redemption, would have been to the Redeemer the most pleasing of all acknowledgments. And what must be His opposite feeling, when, instead of this, the tidings, which ought to have lighted up an ecstacy in every bosom, are heard by this world's vast majority with perfect unconcern; and when, in reference to the mass and multitude of our species, the labour of His wondrous achievement has been wholly thrown away. That the gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus is treated by many as a useless thing, may be seen from the listlessness of many a Christian auditory, when the transaction is expounded; and from those intervals of many a day and many a week in the private history of individuals, throughout which, amid the urgency of life's ordinary cares, it is never thought of. It is the unimportance which they hereby put upon the Saviour—it is the cold and sullen apathy wherewith his overtures are received by them—it is the pre-engagement of their hearts with the frivolities of life, and the utter powerlessness even of the largest offers and the largest hopes of an inheritance above to do it away—it is that thankless lethargy, out of which the message of pardon and of the price whereat it was obtained, is unable to move them—it is their insensibility, both to the great privilege which is held forth to sinners, and to the great expense of suffering and degradation and labour at which it was earned for them by the Saviour—These form the constituents of a provocation, which is now accumulating every day in the breast of the offended High Priest, and which, on that day when He shall come down from Heaven, even as He was seen go into Heaven, will fall with one overwhelming discharge upon them.

You may be enabled to conceive from this, why God has so much complacency, in the trust and in the rejoicing confidence, which a believer feels in the promises of the gospel. It is setting on the work of His own Son its proper estimation. Our joy is a right acknowledgment, just as our indifference is a grievous and a highly displeasing affront. And thus it is, that when His disciples persisted in sluggishness and sorrow, Christ was grieved for it; and that God resents, as He would the imputation of a lie, when they to whom salvation is preached, will not lay their confiding hold upon it; and that the peace, and the joy, and the glorying of Faith, are all so acceptable in His sight; and that the dread and the distrust and the despondency, all of them sensations opposite to these, are felt by Him to be so injurious, that, among those who shall have part in the second death, are ranked the fearful and the unbelieving. Thus are we bidden to rejoice in the Lord; and when, in the face of all that our Saviour hath done, we remain in the bondage either of earthly griefs or of earthly affections, He is entitled to feel the indignation of slighted and underrated services.

II. But secondly, this acceptance of Christ involves in it something more than the admission of a new hope. It involves the acquisition of a new character; and this cannot be accomplished without what is painful to nature—the surrender of old desires and affections to the mastery of new desires and affections, which are substituted in their room. There is not merely the translation into a new hope. There is the translation into a new practical habit. The hope in fact will induce the habit. The man who looks with a delighted eye on the open gate of Heaven, and the now unobstructed path which leads to it—that man must, at the same time, be aspiring after Heaven's graces; and must have entered on those moralities both of heart and life which give to Heaven all its gladness. A man could no more rejoice in the prospect of the real Heaven of Eternity without a taste and a desire towards its spiritual excellence—than he could rejoice in the prospect of entering for life upon a foreign land, whose government and customs and people were every way hateful to him. It is thus that the faith of the gospel induces, or brings in sure and speedy train after it, the character of the gospel. The very entrance upon its hope implies a turning of the soul. B

it, there is not only a looking of the inner man after another portion—but there is a choice of that portion. The man who believes, takes up with Heaven as his eternal habitation; and this he cannot do without a transference of the heart to other things, than those whereby it wont to be occupied. Now, it is the aversion of men to this transference, which forms the great obstacle to their acceptance of the gospel. They do not believe, because they love the darkness rather than the light. Their heart is engaged with things present, and agreeably engaged; and hence their disinclination to things future. They have no other wish than to be as they are. The gravitation of their souls is towards earth; and they want not this to be thwarted or disturbed by any cause, that would impress an aspiring tendency in the opposite direction. This is the real secret of their indisposition to the overtures of the gospel. Their mind is darkened, just because their fond and foolish heart is darkened. They labour under a blindness, no doubt—but it is because they labour under a moral unwillingness. They do not see the evidence which would give them faith; but it is because they shut their eyes, or, which is the same thing, they will not attend to the evidence. This world contents them; and they are utterly indisposed for any overtures at all about another world. It is vain to tell them that Christ makes a free offer of happiness to them all—if it be not happiness, or be not pleasure, in the way they like it. They will not part with the earthly for the heavenly. They will not give up their carnal preferences, to which they are urged by nature—for those spiritual delights which are held out to every believer, for his recreation in time, for his full and satisfying enjoyment through eternity. They do not breathe with any kindredness of feeling in a spiritual atmosphere; and, children as they are of sense and secularity, they refuse to turn from their own way. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life; and He, looking down upon them from the mediatorial throne to which He has been exalted, sees, that, after all He has done to roll away the obstacles between earth and heaven—that after the toil and the agony of the great propitiation have all been expended—that after barriers have been levelled, and crooked places been made straight, and rough places plain, and a highway for sinners has been thrown across the dark and dreary infinite which separated them from God—that after by the strength of His own right arm he had forced this mysterious passage, and planted upon it the flag of invitation—He now sees, after He has thus brought eternity within their reach, that, fastened in the thraldom of their own base and inglorious affections, they remain immoveable; that they continue to grovel as before, and it matters not to them what facilities have been struck out or what the avenues that are now opened to the paradise above—because earth is dearer to them than Heaven; and the delights of this sensible though passing world far more enchanting to their spirits, than all the splendid honours and all the offered joys of immortality.

And it is just because this rejection of the gospel is a thing of will upon our side, that it is a thing of provocation upon His side. Had our unbelief been the blindness of those who could not see, there would have been no room for wrath on the part of the Saviour. But it is the blindness of those who will not see; and it is this which gives its moral force to the remonstrance—"Ye will not come—or rather ye are not willing to come that ye may have life." We can be at no loss to perceive, how the Saviour must stand affected by this treatment on man's part of that economy over which He now presides, and which He Himself hath so laboriously instituted. The scorn, or at least the apathy, wherewith man puts the glories of the purchased inheritance away from him—the choice that he still makes of time, after immortality has been thus brought near to him—the inefficiency of the gospel with all its encouragements, to lure him from the world and bring him to reconciliation with God—the sinful and the sordid appetency for earth, which not even the now accessible Heaven with its pure and perpetual joys can overcome—the inert and invincible sluggishness, wherewith he still adheres to the carnalities of the old man, and from which all the proclamations of grace cannot move him—the busy rounds of

pleasure or of gain or of ambition, at which he keeps plying as assiduously, as if earth were the platform on which he was to expatiate for ever—All these mark such an obstinate affinity to sense, such a rooted dislike and diversity of his taste from all sacredness, as will go most effectually on the day of judgment to characterize and to condemn him. The free gospel hath acted as a criterion, for fixing on which side of the question between earth and Heaven it is that his affections lie. And He who sees him from the place of ascension which He now occupies—He who hath consecrated for him, by His own blood, a path by which the sinner if he will might return unto God —if in the face of this the sinner will not, might not He the Saviour, on the day in which He comes down and takes account of the world, fill his mouth with an overwhelming argument? Will not that be a clear justice, which shuts out from the high and the holy abode, him who all life long hath persisted in the earthliness which he loved, and from which even the open gate of Heaven and the voice of welcome that issued therefrom could not disengage him? In going up unto Heaven Christ is said to have arisen there for our justification. But in coming down from Heaven, He will come for the enhanced condemnation of those who have declined His grace, and so have kept by their own guiltiness. They shall be made to eat the fruit of their own ways; and as they chose to walk in their own counsels, by these counsels they shall fall.

That prisoner is not to blame, who makes no attempt to escape from the dungeon whose gates are impregnably shut against him. But should he refuse the guidance of the benefactor who has thrown open these gates, and who offers to conduct him to a place of enlargement, where he shall have air and light and liberty—he verily is the author of his own undoing, if he pine and perish among the noxious damps of his prison-house. And it is thus that Christ now offers to set the spiritual captive free. He hath cleared away all legal obstructions. He hath provided an open door of access unto God. He hath opened a clear exit for us all from the place of condemnation, and now invites us to that glorious liberty which consists in the service of love and willingness. It is not easy to conceive the physical preference of a dark and dismal confinement, to a free range on the domain of nature; but we see exemplified every day, the moral preference of a continued thraldom amongst the idolatries of sense and of the world, to an outlet or emancipation of the soul into the regions of sacredness and of spiritual health and of spiritual harmony. Ours is the era of a great embassy from heaven to earth; and men are beseeched to make good that escape from slavery which has been provided in the gospel; and Christ, from the eminence on which He now stands, is watching and witnessing how His messengers are received and what is the effect of their solicitations. This is the character of our interesting period; and our doom for eternity hangs upon it. It is fixed by our own choice. Should we love to breathe in the atmosphere of spiritual death, it is the only atmosphere that we shall breathe in for ever. And if now that Christ hath gone up into Heaven, we follow Him not in faith and by upward aspirations there—when He again comes down from Heaven, He will recognise us to be still carnal—He will deal with us as enemies.

III. But Christianity implies something more than one great and initial surrender of affection on the part of the inner man. There are daily and hourly services, which come historically after this. There is something more than one great revulsion from the old habit of nature. We do not merely pass into another state. We enter upon another path; and, in so doing, launch forth among all the activities of a sustained and unremitting progress. It is not enough that there be in our heart the desires of righteousness—there must be upon our history the deeds of righteousness. Christ becomes the master of our services, as well as of our affections; and it is not only the heart which responds to Him in gratitude, but the hand moves, and is obedient at the bidding of his voice. The one, in fact, is the test of the other. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." To complete the relation between Christ and His disciples, He must be throned

in authority over them, as well as the supreme object of their regards; and then it is that His doctrine, instead of a controversial speculation, becomes the efficient principle both of a new character and of a new life. The ultimate design of His economy, in fact, is not to justify but to sanctify men. It is to evolve a new moral harmony out of the chaos of our present world—and then only do His word and doctrine prosper unto that for which they have been sent, when the disciples thereof emerge into virtue, and become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is when He succeeds in making you holy and obedient creatures, that He sees in you of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. The same eye which gazed with delight on the lilies of the field, perceives with a higher delight the efflorescence of Heaven's graces upon your person. The great object of His administration, is to build up and beautify a moral landscape, in the midst of which He might everlastingly rejoice. And for this purpose, He who judgeth by your fruits, would train and transform you into trees of righteousness, which, though rooted in the soil and sediment of the world, may, under the cultivation of His own spiritual husbandry, be at length meet for being transplanted into the paradise of God. Now, it is by acts of Heavenly obedience, that you promote this heavenly vegetation. It is by the doings of the hand on the side of virtue, that you strengthen and confirm still more the desires of the heart after it. It is by the busy conduct of the disciple, that a reflex influence is sent back upon his soul; and all those principles are fixed more tenaciously than before, which enter into the formation of the disciple's character. And so by the readier humanity, and the godlier watchfulness, and soberness, and fear of every day, do you rise from one degree of grace unto another; and carry onward that great object of sanctification, which the heart of your Redeemer is, if not solely, yet supremely set upon.

Thus it is, that, by the deeds done in the body, you will be judged in the great day of reckoning. It is upon these that our Saviour will demonstrate you to be His own. As the tree is known by its fruits, so He will make known by your deeds to the august assembly of men and of angels, that you are of His husbandry, and fit for being removed into His Father's vineyard in Heaven. It is worthy of observation, that, on the sentence being declared, it will be said that you are His—not inasmuch as you have believed, nor inasmuch as you have desired, but inasmuch as you have done. Your destiny will be made to hang direct upon your doings—as being in truth the best vouchers, both for the feelings of your heart, and the faith of your understanding. And we bid you think therefore, of the busy interest and regard wherewith your judge in Heaven is now looking on; and of the book of record and remembrance which is now before Him; and of the materials which He is now gathering from your each day's history, for the examinations and the judgments of a future day. He is now on that post of observation, whither He has ascended for a season, and whence he descries the whole line of your history in the world. But that season will come to its close; and then there will ensue another great movement in God's administration. He who was seen go into Heaven, will again come down from Heaven; and will be met in living array by the men of all generations. He will come fraught with the archives of your present history; and, now your vigilant and unerring witness, will He then be your impartial judge. Do you live under an affecting sense of these plain but all important realities? Do you ever once think of Christ's eye being upon you? Do you ever once think of His judgment awaiting you? Do these enter at all as elements into your deliberation? And we would ask whether it is possible that you can stand then with acceptance before him—if now, the general habit of your mind be that of listless unconcern, either to the cognizance which He takes of you at present, or to the reckoning which He will have with you in future—braving alike the omniscience of His present regards, the justice and the certainty of His coming retributions?

And now would we have you to lay it upon your consciences, whether you indeed lie under a real and practical sense of the economy which has been

set up at this period of the world—whether you conform to the spirit and the character of God's existing administration—whether, while the Judge at His right hand is impending over you and marking all your ways, you at the same time feel and move as if an eye from Heaven were looking on—or whether, as if disjoined from all relationship with aught that is above, or as if the planet that you occupy had drifted away beyond the cognizance of the upper world, is the whole style of your history upon earth just what it would have been, though the ascended Jesus had taken His eternal leave; and, on quitting the abodes of humanity, had quitted all superintendence of our concerns? But he causes us to know in the text, that He has not so quitted us—that He still keeps a hold of our species—that, instead of having left us for ever, He is to come again and to have a visible meeting with each and all of the members of the human family—that, however now He may stand concealed from mortal view in the remoteness and mystery of the place to which He has gone, the time is coming when every eye shall behold Him; and the gaze of a universal world shall be turned towards Him, as He approaches the judgment-seat fraught with the materials of a solemn examination; and which materials He is now gathering from the doings of your present day, and of your past yesterday, and of your future morrow—thereby stamping an eternal importance on all the passages of your familiar history, and giving to the hourly details of your business in life a bearing on your destiny for ever. And tell me, ye men who from Sabbath to Sabbath breathe in no other air than that of irreligion, and who if you do come to church receive but a passing emotion, that, like the glow of sentiment or poetry, soon vanishes away—tell me how it is possible that you can escape the frown and the condemnation and the lawful penalty, when thus the whole habit of your existence is at utter variance with the realities of your state; and you shall have passed from your infancy to your grave as recklessly along, as if there were to be no resurrection, no trial, no fearfulness beyond death, no life that can feel or suffer or be the subject of wrath and anguish and tribulation through eternity.

We may conclude with stating what appears to us one great distinction between a religionist and an ordinary man. There is a pervading unity and greatness of object in the life of the former. In that of the latter there is a fitful and fluctuating waywardness. The one is like a voyage, where the drift of every movement is towards a certain quarter of the heavens, and with the view to a fixed place of arrival. The other is like the random, the ever-varying course of a vessel, that has been abandoned and is at the mercy of a thousand capricious impulses. The one, in selecting his end, has shot ahead as it were of all that is intermediate between him and the grave; and so his high and habitual reference is ever towards that place in the history of his being, which forms the exit of his time—the entrance of his eternity. The other may have selected his ends also; but lying a short way in the distance before him, they are ever shifting and shaping anew among the mutabilities of life, with the deceits of human fancy, with the disappointments of human foresight. The one familiarly conversant with the great elements of death and judgment and life everlasting, moves along the path which bears him onward with the lofty consciousness of one, the simplicity yet comprehensive grandeur of whose aim sublimes his spirit above the cares and the passions of commonplace humanity. The other, heedless and perhaps unseeing of the remote but ever-during interest of his existence, vacillates and is lost in the countless multitude of those lesser influences, each of which gains one little hour of ascendancy, and then passes fruitless and forgotten away from him. His journey is like the aimless ramble of a schoolboy, when compared to the high bearing of him who walks through life with the gait of an immortal creature—who knows that every footstep brings him nearer to Heaven, and whose daily advances in sanctification are the stepping-stones by which he is conducted to Heaven's glory.

The advice of that wise moralist, Dr. Johnson, to a friend, under the discomfort of some sore annoyance—was to be-

think himself of what a trifle it should appear that day twelvemonth. And thus it is that human life is dissipated in a series of trifles. On looking back to that busy alternation of cares, and wishes, and anxieties, each of which has in its turn been the short-lived tenant of man's restless and ever-brooding spirit, we cannot miss the reflection—what a waste both of comfort and energy on topics which, after all, have been productive of nothing. It is high time to recall ourselves from these fugitive vanities—to strike a nobler aim, and seek a more enduring interest—and, for this purpose, to cast a further anticipation on the futurity which lies before us. And along the whole of this perspective, there seems no event, the contemplation of which is more fitted to still the spirit into seriousness, or bring it up to the high resolves of Christianity, than the coming advent of the Saviour—an event on one side of which lie all the recollections of time, and on the other side all the retributions of eternity. Meanwhile, and ere He take the decisive movement from the mercy-seat which He now fills in Heaven, to the judgment-seat which He then will occupy on earth, He bids you all flee from the coming wrath—He holds out even to the guiltiest of you all the sceptre of an offered reconciliation—He plies you alike with the overtures of pardon and the calls of repentance; a pardon sealed by the blood of a satisfying atonement, in which He invites you to trust, and a repentance achieved through the aids of a strengthening spirit, for which he invites you to pray. This is the season of your full and welcome opportunity. That will be the day of your trial. Now you are urged by the entreaties of a free gospel, and by compliance therewith, you propitiate the wrath of the offended Saviour. Then, should you have withheld compliance, will you be judged by the requisitions of a fiery law; and the unaverted, the aggravated wrath of Heaven, will descend in judgment upon your heads. "O kiss the Son, then, lest He be angry, and while He is in the way—for blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him."

SERMON XXII.

God is Love.

"God is love."—JOHN iv. 16.

Did we only give credit to the text, did we but view God as love—on this simple translation into another belief, would there be the translation into another character. We should feel differently of God, the moment that we thought of Him differently; and with the establishment of this new faith, there would instantly emerge a new heart and a new nature.

For, let us attend, in the first place, to the original conception of Humanity, placed and constituted as it now is, in reference to this great and invisible Being—secondly, let us adduce the likeliest considerations, the likeliest arguments, by which to overcome this conception, and to find lodgement in the human breast for another and an opposite conception in its place—And, thirdly, let us stop to contemplate the effect of such a change in the state of man's understanding as to God, on the whole system of his feelings and conduct.

I. Under the first general head, then, let it be observed—that there are two reasons why we should conceive God to be so actuated as to inspire us with terror, or at least with distrust; instead of conceiving Him to be actuated by that love which the text ascribes to Him; and which were no sooner believed than it would set us at ease, and inspire us with delightful confidence.

1. The first of these reasons, which we shall allege, admits of being illustrated by a very general experience of

human nature. It may be shortly stated thus—Whenever placed within the reach of any Being, of imagined power, but withal of unknown purpose—that Being is the object of our dismay. It is not necessary for this, that we should be positively assured of His hostility. It is enough, that, for aught we know, He may be hostile; and that, for aught we know, He has strength enough for the execution of His displeasure. Uncertainty alone will beget terror; and the fancies of mere ignorance, are ever found to be images of fear. It is thus, that a certain recoil of dread and aversion, would be felt in the presence of a strange animal, whatever the gentleness of its nature—if simply its nature were unknown. And hence, too, the fear of a child for strangers, who must first make demonstration of their love by their gifts, or their caresses—ere they can woo it into confidence. And so also the consternation of savages, on the first approach of a mighty vessel to their shores—more especially if in smoke, and thunder, and feats of marvellous exhibition, it hath given the evidence of its power. It may be a voyage of benevolence; but this they as yet know not. They only behold the power; and power beheld singly is tremendous. And many often are the vain attempts at approximation, the fruitless demonstrations and signals of good-will, ere they can conquer their distrust; or recall them to free and fearless intercourse, from the woods or the lurking-places to which they had fled for safety. Such, then, is the universal bias of nature, whenever the power is known and the purpose is unknown. Men give way to the visions of terror, to the dark misgivings of a troubled imagination. The quick and instant suggestion, on all these occasions, is that of fear; and the difficulty, an exceeding difficulty, for it is as if working against a constitutional law or tendency of the heart, is to reassure it into confidence.

If such then be the effect on human feelings of a power that is known, associated with purposes that are unknown—we are not to wonder that the great and invisible God is invested to our eyes with the imagery of terror. It is verily because great, and at the same time invisible, that we so invest Him. It is precisely because the Being who hath all the energies of nature at command, is at the same time shrouded in mystery impenetrable—that we view Him as tremendous. All regarding Him is inscrutable—the depths of His past eternity—the mighty and unknown extent of his creation—the secret policy or end of His government, a government that embraces an infinity of worlds, and reaches forward to an infinity of ages—All these leave a being so circumscribed in his faculties as man, so limited in his duration and therefore in his experience, in profoundest ignorance of God and of His ways. And then the inaccessible retirement in which He hides himself from the observation of His creatures here below—the clouds and darkness which are about the pavilion of His residence—the utter impotency of man, to pierce his way beyond the confines of that materialism which hems and incloses him, so as at all to fathom the essence of the Godhead, or to obtain any distinct apprehension of His personality and His Being—the silence the deep unbroken silence of many centuries, insomuch that nature, however distinctly it may tell of His existence, is to our senses a screen of interception in the way of nature's God. There is a mighty gulph of separation—an interval, a mysterious and untrodden interval, between the spirituality of the Godhead on the one hand, and all that the eye of man can see or the ear of man can hear upon the other—a barrier, which man with all his powers of curious and searching inspection cannot force; and across which God, at least for many ages, hath sent forth no direct or visible manifestation of His own person or His own character. And so, whatever the confidence or the manifested kindness may have been in those primeval days, when God walked with man in the bowers of his earthly paradise and among the smiling beauties of its garden—certain it is, that now, exiled from the divine presence, all his confidence has fled. Now that the divinity is withdrawn from mortal view, man trembles at the thought of Him; and the dread imagination, whether of a present wrath or a coming vengeance, is the only homage which nature renders to an unknown God.

And there is nothing in the varying

aspects of Creation, or in the varying fortunes of human life, which can at all alleviate our perplexity, in regard to the final designs or character of God. For if, on the one hand, the smile and the sunshine and the softer beauties of the landscape, would seem to picture forth the milder virtues of the Divinity—these are alternated by other and opposite expressions, in the sweeping flood, and the angry tempest, and that dread thunder from the skies wherewith the mysterious Being who rules in the firmament above overawes a prostrate world. And if, on the one hand, the shelter and abundance and natural affection and unnumbered sweets of many a cottage home, might serve to indicate the profuse benevolence of Him who is the great, the universal Parent of the human family—on the other, the cares; the heart-burnings; the moral discomforts; often the pining sickness, or cold and cheerless poverty; more largely and palpably still the fierce contests unto blood and mutual destruction, even among civilized men; and lastly, as if to crown and consummate all, the death, the unsparing and relentless death, which sweeps off generation after generation, and, in like ghastly triumph, whether among the abodes of the prosperous or unhappy, after the brief subsistence of a few little years, lays all the varieties of human fortune in the dust—These, on the other hand, bespeak, if not a malignant, at least an offended Deity. It is in the midst of such contradictory appearances, that the question of the divine administration becomes a profound, a hopeless enigma—at once to exercise and baffle all spirits; and the lofty, the unapproachable Being, who presides over it, is the object of our dread because to us mantled in deepest obscurity, is terrible because unknown.

We have only explained one of the two reasons, why nature's conception of God, is such as to inspire terror rather than our grateful or rejoicing confidence; and, ere we proceed to the consideration of the second, we feel strongly inclined, though we should thereby anticipate the next head of discourse, to state, even now, and in immediate sequence to our first reason for thinking hardly and adversely of God, to state, and as far as we are able, enforce the appropriate counterpart argument, by which that reason may be met and ought to be overcome.

The argument then that we are in quest of, is not to be found in the whole range or within the whole compass of visible nature. It is only to be found in one of the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A certain distrust, nay a certain terror, will still continue to haunt and to disquiet us—so long as any ambiguity continues to rest on the character of God. But there is such an ambiguity; and which no observation of nature, or no experience of human life can dissipate. Whatever of the falsely or the superstitiously fearful imagination conjures up, because of God being at a distance, can only be dispelled by God, brought nigh unto us. The spiritual must become sensible. The vail which hides the unseen God from the eye of mortals, must be somehow withdrawn. Now all this has been done once, and done only, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ—He being the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. The Godhead became palpable to human senses; and man could behold, as in a picture or in distinct personification, the very characteristics of the Being who made him. Then truly did men hold converse with Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. They saw His glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and the very characteristics of the Divinity Himself may be said to have appeared in authentic representation before them, when God manifest in the flesh descended on Judea and sojourned amongst its earthly tabernacles. By this mysterious movement from Heaven to Earth, the dark the untrodden interval, which separates the Corporeal from the Spiritual, was at length overcome. The King eternal and invisible was then placed within the ken of mortals. They saw the Son, and in Him saw the Father also—so that while contemplating the person and the history of a man, they could make a study of the Godhead.

And it is thus the unequivocal demonstration has been given, that God is love. We could not scale the heights of that mysterious ascent, which might bring us within view of the Godhead. It is by

the descent of the Godhead unto us, that this great manifestation has been given; and we learn and know of God, from the wondrous history of Him who went about doing good continually. We could not go in search of the viewless Deity, through the depths and the vastnesses of Infinitude; or discover the secret, the untold purposes, that were brooding there. But in no way could a more palpable exhibition have been made, than when the eternal Son shrined in humanity stepped forth on the platform of visible things, and on the proclaimed errand to seek and to save us. We can now read the character of God, in the human looks and in the human language of Him, who is the very image and visible representation of the Deity. We see it in the tears of sympathy which He shed. We hear it in the accents of tenderness which fell from Him. Even His very remonstrances were those of a meek and gentle nature; for they are remonstrances of deepest pathos, the complaints of a longing and affectionate spirit, against the sad perversity of men bent on their own undoing. When visited with the fear that God looks hardly and adversely towards us, let us think of Him who had compassion on the famishing multitudes; of Him who mourned with the sisters of Lazarus; of Him who, when He approached the city of Jerusalem wept over it, at the thought of its coming desolation. And knowing that the Son is like unto the Father, let us re-assure our hopes with the certainty that God is love.

2. But there is still another reason, why, instead of viewing God as love, we should apprehend Him to be a God of severity and of stern displeasure. And it is not, like the former, but a fearful imagination, a mere product of uncertainty —or resulting from a headlong bias, on the part of the human mind, to the superstitiously dark and terrific, when employed in contemplating what is vast and at the same time unknown. It has a firmer basis to rest upon—not conjured up by fancy from a distant land of shadows; but drawn from the intimacies of one's own consciousness, and suggested by one of the surest facts or findings in the homestead of man's moral nature. The truth is that, by the constitution of humanity, there is a law of right and wrong in every heart; and which each possessor of that heart knows himself to have habitually violated. But more than this. Along with the felt certainly of such a law, there is the resistless apprehension of a Lawgiver; of a God offended by the disobedience of His creatures; of a Judge, and so of a judgment that awaits us; of a governor, or king in Heaven, between whom and ourselves there is a yet unsettled controversy, and because of which we are disquieted with the thought of a reckoning and a vengeance that are to come. We cannot view God as Love, at the very time that conscience so powerfully tells us to view Him as an enemy. Even though the lights of Nature and Christianity should conspire to inform us that love is a general characteristic of the Divinity, we cannot feel the personal or practical influence of such a contemplation, so long as we are sensible of His special and merited displeasure; and that the truth and the justice and the high and holy attributes of a nature which is unchangeable, seem imperiously to require that this displeasure shall be executed.—While haunted by the misgivings of a guilty nature, which tells us of our own danger and our own insecurity, we could no more delight ourselves with the general benevolence of God—than we could luxuriate in tasteful contemplation over the beauties, which, far and wide, even to the most distant horizon, surrounded the mountain's base, if ourselves exposed to the menaces of a bursting volcano that was above our head. It is thus that we lose all sense of God, so long as we view God through the medium of our own troubled consciences. Even though reasoning alone were to establish this beautiful property in God, as an article of calm and philosophical conviction, the agitations of terror grounded on the consciousness of our self-deservings, would disturb this conviction or displace it altogether. This is not a mere spectral alarm as the former, but has both a definite object and definite cause; and, instead of an airy imagination, is grounded on the universal sense, which nature has of its own actual and ascertained guiltiness.

And this apprehension is not more general than it is strong, and not to be overcome by a mere eloquent or sentimental representation of the Deity—as if

He possessed but the one characteristic of tenderness; or as if this were the single excellence of a moral nature, signalized by all that is high and all that is holy.—There is a meagre theology that would fain resolve the entire character of God into the one attribute of kindness; but there is a theology of conscience that maintains the ascendancy notwithstanding, and keeps its ground against this frail imagination. To Him who is seated on the throne of the universe, we, in spite of ourselves, ascribe the virtues of the Sovereign as well as the virtues of the parent; and, however much it might have suited our convenience and our wishes, that we could at all times have taken refuge in the general and indefinite placability of God, there are certain immutabilities of truth and nature that cannot thus be disposed of. For, attempt it as we will, we cannot find repose in the imagination of a law without enforcements, of a lawgiver without authority, of a government without sanctions, of a sentence without effect, and so of guilt without the execution of its proclaimed and threatened penalty. And thus the ever-meddling conscience within, as irrepressible as it is importunate, keeps man in perpetual fear of God; and tells him, with felt authority too, that it is a well-grounded fear. We cannot rid from our apprehension a jurisprudence, a strict and guarded and awful jurisprudence, which enters into the relationship between Heaven and earth; and the honours of which cannot be let down, without despoiling the sanctuary of God of all that is great and all that is venerable.—We cannot think of God with confidence or hope, whilst we think of ourselves as delinquents at the bar of that august and unviolable tribunal where He sitteth in judgment over us. We cannot even see Him to be love, through the troubled medium of remorse and fear; and far less rejoice or take comfort in it as a love directed to ourselves.

Now, as in counteraction to our first reason for viewing God with apprehension and thus losing sight of Him as a God of love, we adduced one peculiar doctrine of Christianity—so, in counteraction to our second reason, we now adduce another peculiar doctrine of Christianity; and that by far the noblest and most precious of its articles. The one was the doctrine of the Incarnation. The other is the doctrine of the Atonement. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins." By the former, a conquest has been made over the imaginations of ignorance. By the latter, a conquest has been made over, not the imaginations, but the solid and well-grounded fears of guilt. By the one, or through means of a divine incarnation, we are told of the Deity embodied; and thus the love of God has been made the subject, as it were, of ocular demonstration. By the other, or through means of a divine Sacrifice, we are told of the Deity propitiated; and thus the love of God has been made to shine forth, in midst of the law's sustained and vindicated honours. It is this conjunction of mercy with truth and righteousness; it is this harmony of all the divine attributes in the scheme of reconciliation; it is this skilful congruity established in the gospel, between the salvation of the sinner and the authority as well as justice of the Sovereign—which so adapts the mediatorial economy under which we sit, to all the wants and exigencies of our fallen nature. A naked proclamation of mercy could not have set the conscience at rest, could never have effectually hushed those perpetual misgivings wherewith the heart of the sinner is haunted,—who, by the very constitution of his moral nature, must, when he does think of God, think and tremble before him as a God of justice. This it is which letteth; and, ere peace and confidence can be fully or firmly restored to the sinner's distempered bosom, that which letteth must be taken out of the way. And it has been taken out of the way—for now nailed to the cross of Christ. In this glorious spectacle do we see the mystery resolved; and the compassion of the parent meeting in fullest harmony, with the now asserted, the now vindicated prerogatives of the lawgiver. We there behold justice satisfied and mercy made sure. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a halo of all the attributes; and yet the pre-eminent manifestation there is of God as love—for it is love, not only rejoicing over all the works, but shrined in full consent while

shedding enhanced lustre amidst all the perfections of the divine nature.

And here it should be especially noticed, that the atonement made for the sins of the world, though its direct and primary object be to vindicate the truth and justice of the Godhead—instead of casting obscuration over His love, only gives more emphatic demonstration of it. For instead of love, simple, and spontaneous, and finding its unimpeded way, without obstruction and without difficulty to the happiness of its objects—it was a love, which, ere it could reach the guilty millions whom it longed after, had to face the barrier of a moral necessity, that to all but infinite strength and infinite wisdom was insuperable. It was a love which had to force aside the mountain of those iniquities that separated us from God. The high and holy characteristics of a Being who is unchangeable stood in its way; and the mystery which angels desired to look unto, was how the King Eternal who sitteth on heaven's throne could at once be a just God and a Saviour. The love of God, in conflict with such an obstacle and triumphing over it, is a higher exhibition of the attribute, than all the love which radiates from His throne on the sinless families of the unfallen. And then we are taught, that, for the achievement of this mighty deliverance, not only had the Captain of our salvation to travel in the greatness of His strength, but to sustain a deep and dreadful endurance. The redemption of mankind was wrought out, in the midst of agonies and cries and all the symptoms of a sore and bitter humiliation. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; on Him the chastisement of our peace was laid; and when bowing down His head unto the sacrifice, He had to bear the full burden of a world's expiation. The affirmation that God loveth the world is inconceivably heightened in significancy and strength of evidence, to him who owns the authority of Scripture, and has treasured up these sayings—that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; or, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; or, that herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent His Son into the world, to be the propitiation for our sins. There is a moral, a depth and intensity of meaning, a richness of sentiment that the Bible calls unsearchable, in the cross of Christ. It tells a sinful world that God is righteousness; and it as clearly and emphatically tells us that God is love.

But, for the purpose of making this doctrine available to ourselves personally, we must view the love of God, not as a vague and inapplicable generality, but as specially directed, nay actually proffered, and that pointedly and individually to each of us. It is not sufficiently adverted to by inquirers, nor sufficiently urged by ministers, that the constitution of the gospel warrants this appropriation of its blessings by each man for himself.

This all-important truth, so apt to be lost sight of in lax and hazy speculation, may be elicited from the very terms in which the gospel is propounded to us, from the very phraseology in which its overtures are couched. It is a message of good news unto *all people*—to me therefore as one of the people, for where is the scripture which tells that I am an outcast? Christ is set forth as a propitiation for the sins of the *world;* and God so loved the *world* as to send His Son into it. Let me therefore, who beyond all doubt am in the world, take the comfort of these gracious promulgations—for it is only if out of the world, or away from the world, that they do not belong to me. The delusive imagination in the heart of many, and by which the gospel is with them bereft of all significancy and effect, is, that they cannot take any general announcement or general invitation that is therein to themselves, unless in virtue of some certain mark or certain designation, by which they are specially included in it. Now, in real truth, it is all the other way. It would require a certain mark, or certain designation specially to exclude them; and without some such mark which might expressly signalize them, they should not refuse to part in the announcements or invitations of the gospel. If the gospel have made no exception of them, they either misunderstand that gospel, or by their unbelief make the author of it a liar, if they except themselves. They demand a particular warrant, for believing that the

are comprehended within the limits of the gospel call to reconciliation with God. Now the call is universal; and it would rather need a particular warrant, to justify their own dark and distrustful imagination of being without its limits. When in the spirit of a perverse or obstinate melancholy, they ask their Christian minister—what is the ground on which he would bid them in to the household of God's reconciled family?—well may he ask, what is the ground on which they would keep themselves out? He stands on a triumphant vantage-footing for his own vindication. His commission is to preach the gospel to *every* creature under heaven, and that takes them in—or to say that *whosoever* cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out, and that takes them in—or behold I stand at the door and knock, if *any* man will open I shall enter into friendship and peace with him, that also takes them in—or look unto me *all* ye ends of the earth and be saved; there is no outcast spoken of here, and that too takes them in—or, *every* man who asketh receiveth; and surely, if language have a meaning, that takes them in—or Christ came into the world to save *sinners;* and, unless they deny themselves to be sinners, that takes them in. In a word, although they may cast themselves out, the primary overtures of the gospel recognise no outcast. They are not forbidden by God—they are only forbidden by themselves. There is no straitening with Him. The straitening is only in their own narrow and suspicious and ungenerous bosoms. It is true they may abide in spiritual darkness if they will—even as a man can, at his own pleasure, immure himself in a dungeon, or obstinately shut his eyes. Still it holds good, notwithstanding, that the light of the Sun in the Firmament is not more open to all eyes, than the light of the Sun of Righteousness is for the rejoicing of the spirits of all flesh. The blessings of the gospel are as accessible to all who will, as are the water or the air or any of the cheap and common bounties of nature. The element of Heaven's love is in as universal diffusion among the dwelling-places of men, as is the atmosphere they breathe in. It solicits admittance at every door; and the ignorance or unbelief of man are the only obstacles which it has to struggle with. It is commensurate with the species; and may be tendered, urgently and honestly tendered, to each individual of the human family.

III. Let us now suppose, in any instance, that to the tender on the one side there is an acceptance upon the other; that God is taken at His word; and, instead of being regarded with jealousy or terror as a distant and inaccessible lawgiver, that He is beheld as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ our Lord; that the dark and before impenetrable vail, which hitherto had mantled the benign aspect of the divinity is withdrawn; that the mercy-seat is seen in Heaven, not the less to be relied on in its being mercy met with truth; that disclosure is made of the love with its smiles of welcome which beams and beckons there, not the less but the more to be trusted and rejoiced in, that it is a love in full conjunction with righteousness—a love consecrated with the blood of an everlasting covenant, and shrined conspicuous and triumphant amid the honours of a vindicated law. Only imagine a translation of this sort, a translation truly out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and do you not perceive, that, with the light of the gospel in the mind, the love of the gospel in the heart will follow in its train? and that the love of goodwill in God, when once seen and recognised by us, will surely draw our love of gratitude back again? If we had but the perception, the emotion would come unbidden, or, in the words of the apostle, if we knew and believed the love which God hath to us, we should love God because He first loved us.

And here we may understand the regenerating power of Faith. One of its functions is to justify. But its higher and greater function is to sanctify men. Let but the cold obstruction of unbelief be removed; and from that moment, the emancipated heart, as if by the operation of a charm, will beat freely and willingly in love to God, and love for all His services. This new faith were the turning-point of a new character; and in the difference between God viewed as an object of terror, and God viewed as an object of confidence—on that single differ-

ence, a complete moral revolution is suspended. Let me be made to know and to believe that God loves me; and, by a law of my mental constitution, I shall be made to love Him back again. The intellectual precedes the moral change. It is doctrine, an article of doctrine, not in the place which it occupies as the dogma of a theological system, but as actually seated in the heart and the article there of a substantial and living creed—it is this which subdues the whole man into a new creature. The executive power of working this great transformation lies in the truth. In other words, let the faith of the gospel enter the breast of any individual, and it will renovate the man. Let the faith be universal, and we shall have a renovated world.

We might here indulge in the brilliant perspective of a regenerated species, and that through the practicable stepping-stone, of a declared gospel—seeing that if its doctrine of God loving the world were as generally accepted as it might be heralded through all our pulpits, a nation would be born in a day. But let us rather at present urge a lesson, which each of you might carry personally and practically home; and tell how it is, that one might animate his own heart with the love of God, and keep this sacred affection glowing there. It is not to be summoned into being or activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effect, that you can bid it into operation within you. You can say to the hand, do this, and it doe. But we have no such mastery over the intractable heart—nor can any of its movements be thus subjected to a volition or to a voice. We cannot, by a mere inward and undirected lunge among the recesses of our mental constitution, conjure up any of the emotions at our pleasure. The true way of bidding an emotion into being, is to bid into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up resentment in my heart, let me think of the injury which provokes it—or to be moved with compassion, let me dwell, whether by recollection or fancy, on some picture of wretchedness—or to be regaled with a sense of beauty, let me look objectively and out of myself on the glories of a summer landscape—or to stir up within me a grateful affection, let me call to remembrance some friendly demonstration of a kind and trusty benefactor—or to rekindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let God's love to me be the theme of my believing meditations. I shall never evoke this affection by looking inwardly upon myself; but by looking upwardly to the gospel manifestations of the divine character, I may bring it down from the sanctuary that is above me. In other words it is the faith which elicits and calls out the feeling; and thus both the lessons of the Bible, and the findings of the experimental Christian, are at one with the strict philosophy of the process—when they attest that the way to keep our hearts in the love of God, is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith.

SERMON XXIII.

Fear of Terror and fear of Reverence.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."—1 PETER i. 17.

IN the high and hidden walk of Christian experience, there are mental processes, of which the world at large does not know, and cannot sympathize with. There are even certain apparent contrarieties of feeling, that are fitted to perplex those who never realized them—just because they have never betaken themselves in good earnest, to the business of their salvation. What more inexplicable for instance, than that a disciple should grow in humility, just as he grows in holiness—that he should have a deeper sense of abasement upon his spirit, just as he should have made a loftier ascent in the path of spiritual excellence—that in pro

portion as his advancement in virtue is obvious to all other men, in that very proportion he should become the viler in the sight of his own eyes. This however is not so mysterious perhaps, as certain other paradoxes in the life of a gospel pilgrim—which wear an air of more puzzling inconsistency still, to the general understanding. What for example can be made of this finding on the part of the apostle, that when he was weak then he was strong—or that when he gloried in his infirmities, then he had power to prevail over them—or that when he had no confidence in himself, then he rejoiced the most, and had the greatest success in the whole work and warfare of obedience. This mingling of incompatibilities in the heart and history of believers, goes to stamp upon them the character of a very peculiar people. It is true, the Bible expressly tells us that they are so, and that the peculiarity lies in their being zealous of good works. But it aggravates the peculiarity yet more, when we behold these same people having the utmost zeal for the performance of good works, and yet the utmost zeal against placing their reliance on them; the most accomplished in all the graces of personal righteousness, and yet the least confident of its effect in purchasing for them the rewards of Eternity; the most eminent of all their fellows in the virtues of society as well as in the virtues of sacredness, yet the most forward to disclaim them as articles of merit by which they have earned a sufficient title to the glories and the enjoyments of Heaven. If Christianity be true there must be a solution for all these difficulties; a clue by which to guide our way, through the intricacies both of Christian doctrine and of Christian experience; a light, that, to every honest and patient inquirer, must at length be struck out between the truths of Scripture and the trials of his own heart—and in quest of which, each of us should betake himself to a more diligent study than before of the Bible, to a more busy process than before of moral and spiritual cultivation.

The reason why the verse before us has suggested these general observations, is, because that in regard to the affection which it enjoins, the Scripture hath offered to us another of its seeming contrarieties. We are, in one place, led by the apostle to regard it as the privilege of Christians, that God had not given them the spirit of fear—and yet it is the prayer of the same apostle in behalf both of himself and of his fellow Christians, that they might have grace whereby to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. We are taught by another apostle to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Whereas Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, rejoices in it as a privilege of the new dispensation, that under it we should serve God without fear. The apostle Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and yet the apostle John says, that perfect love casteth out fear, and he that feareth is not perfect. We hope by a further attention to this subject—not merely to vindicate the wisdom and consistency of the Bible in regard to it—but through the divine blessing, so to unfold certain processes in the work of sanctification, as might serve in some degree for the practical guidance of those who now hear us.

It may happen from the poverty of human language, that the same term should be employed to express two affections, which, although they possess a common resemblance, have also such distinct modifications, as really to differ, and that considerably from each other. Nay, so wide may be the difference between them, that while it is the privilege of Christians to be exempted from the one, it is their duty to cherish the other to the uttermost. This may give rise to at least a verbal inconsistency between many passages of the Bible—which, when cleared away, not only delivers this book from a charge which might be alleged against it, but may also elicit an impressive argument in its favour, by manifesting its delicate adaptations to the peculiarities of our chequered and complex Nature.

In the prosecution of this discourse, we shall only remark on that fear whereof God is the object—and not on that fear which is excited in the heart of an earnest and desirous Christian, by the consideration of those hazards to which his final salvation is exposed.

There is a fear towards God that might

be denominated the fear of terror. It is the affection of one who is afraid of Him. There is in it the alarm of selfishness. God is regarded as in a state of displeasure, and as afterwards to wreak that displeasure on the person of him who is the object of it. There is in this fear a dread of God's vengeance. It is at all times connected with a view of one's own personal suffering; and the dire imagery of pain, and tribulation, and perhaps endless and irreversible wretchedness, is perhaps that which chiefly gives dismay and disturbance to his soul. There is an impression of wrath in the breast of an incensed Deity against him; but there is, furthermore, the prospect of some fell and fearful infliction from His uplifted hand. The fear of the sinner is not lest God should be displeased—for were it only to stop here, he should feel no care, and have no disquietude about the matter. But the fear is, lest himself should be destroyed. It is altogether an affection of absorbed and concentrated selfishness. It terminates upon his own person. It is not in the least a moral, but entirely an animal feeling—the same with that, in virtue of which any inferior creature would struggle back from the precipice over which it was to be cast; or eye with trembling recoil the weapon that was brandished for its extermination. Such is the fear of terror. It carries it in no homage to the sacredness of the Divinity—yet is aggravated by a sense of that sacredness, because then God, regarded as a God of unappeasable jealousy, is deemed to be intolerant of all evil; and the guilt-stricken soul, in looking upward to the holiness of the lawgiver, looks forward to its own destruction in that hideous and everlasting hell, where the transgressors of the law find their doom and their landing-place.

Now it is obvious, that, while haunted by a fear of this sort, there can be no free, or willing, or generous obedience. There might be a service of drudgery, but not a service of delight—such obedience as is extorted from a slave by the whip of his overseer—but not a free-will offering of love or of loyalty. It makes all the difference between a slavish and a spontaneous obedience—the one rendered in the oldness of the letter, the other in the newness of the spirit—the one brought about by compulsion of the hand, the other by consent of the heart. And yet, how shall this translation be effected from the spirit of bondage to that of liberty? How shall we get quit of that overwhelming terror, wherewith it is impossible that either affection or confidence can dwell?—and which so long, therefore, as it subsists, must cause the religion of a man upon earth, to be wholly dissimilar from that of an angel in Heaven? For this purpose, and to appease the terror of our own spirits, shall we shut our eyes to what is really terrible in the character of God? Shall we view Him otherwise than as a God of holiness? Shall we dismantle His character of its justice, and righteousness, and truth? Shall we conceive of Him as descending to a compromise with sin, and as relenting in aught from His hatred and hostility against it? To soften the Divinity into an object of our possible tenderness and trust, shall we strip Him of all His moral attributes but one; and, in the midst of all this wild and wasteful anarchy, shall mercy abide as the only surviving perfection of that God whom we deemed to be unchangeable? O, we fear, that the constitution of the Godhead cannot be so tampered with; and that the principles of His everlasting government can never be set aside, nor make way to suit the wishes or the convenience of sinful man. And the question remains, how shall man ever be divested of that terror which is inspired by the sense of an angry God; and which, at the same time, strikes an impotency upon all the efforts of Nature to love God, or to impregnate with a right spirit any part of the obedience which it renders to Him?

It is reserved for the gospel of Jesus Christ to do away this terror from the heart of man, and yet to leave untarnished the holiness of God. It is the atonement that was made by Him which resolves this mystery—providing at once for the deliverance of the sinner, and for the dignity of the Sovereign. That wrath, which had else been poured forth upon the guilty, has all been discharged upon the head of their accepted Substitute; and He, in bowing Himself down unto the sacrifice, has both established in full authority the law, and purchased full

indemnity for those who had put that authority to scorn. This is the great transaction, by which the broken fellowship of earth and Heaven is readjusted; and through this as a free and open medium of communication, can God rejoice as before in all kindness over man, and man again place his rejoicing confidence in God. On doing so, he is disburdened from the terror that had enslaved him, and that had given him the spirit of a crouching pusillanimity to all his obedience. He from this moment enters into liberty. He is no longer haunted by degrading apprehensions about self and about safety. He sees God to be at peace with him, but in such a way as to enhance the sacredness of His now vindicated character; and in the very act of receiving his forgiveness through the hand of a Mediator, he beholds, throughout the whole of the august ceremonial, the heightened lustre that is thrown over the truth, and the justice, and the majesty of the Godhead.

But while this view of God in Christ extinguishes one fear—the fear of terror; it awakens another and an altogether distinct fear—the fear of reverence. God is no longer regarded as the enemy of the sinner; but in the cross of the Redeemer, where this enmity was slain, there is full demonstration of a moral nature that is in utter repugnancy to sin. He does not appear against us in the aspect of a Judge; nor do we hear from His lips the voice of condemnation for sins that are past. But still there is distinctly heard from the mercy-seat the voice of a Father, who, along with the utterance of our pardon, bids us go and sin no more. Now that we have entered into reconciliation, we hear not the upbraidings of the lawgiver, for the despite which in former days we have done unto His will. But the office of the gospel is to regenerate as well as reconcile; and every disciple who embraces it is met with the saying—"This is the will of God even your sanctification." The truth is, that, having found out a way by which to ward off the vengeance of sin from your persons—it is the intent and object of this His new administration to root out its existence from your hearts. With the sinner He has entered into a league of amity; but against sin, and all its serpent brood of abominations, He carries on the same unsparing and implacable warfare as before. Among all the myriads of the redeemed, there is not one individual the guilt of whose sins has been pardoned, the power and the being of whose sins shall not be utterly destroyed. Within the entire compass of our Redeemer's kingdom, not one subject to the end of time ever shall be found, who, ransomed from the condemnation of sin, has not been reclaimed from sin unto Holiness. The great and ultimate design of that new economy under which we sit, is to restore and to perfect in fallen man the lost virtues of the Godhead; and we only conform to this economy, when, after having accepted of its offered forgiveness and so entered into peace, we look unto the venerable image of Him to whom we have been brought nigh, that brightening unto His resemblance every day, we may at length attain to His character and be filled with His fullness.

It will now be understood of all those who have been translated into this new economy, or, to use the language of the apostle, whom God hath translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, it will be understood what the fear is which they are relieved from, and what the fear is which they retain—or how they, conformably to one passage of the New Testament, can serve God without fear; and at the same time, comformably to another passage, can serve Him with reverence and with godly fear. The one is that fear which hath torment, and which perfect love casteth out. The other is that in which the early churches are said to have walked, at the time when they had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. The one is that which belongs to those fearful and unbelieving, of whom it is said that they shall have part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. The other is that which belongs to those of whom it is said, that the mercy of the Lord is unto them who fear Him. Such is the difference of estimation in which these two affections are held; and such the difference, in point of treatment, which they severally shall experience. And it does vin-

dicate the wisdom or discrimination of Scripture, it does mark an intelligent view both of our nature and of the bearings which the evangelical system of revelation has upon it, when it appears, that, confounded though they be under one denomination, there is a like difference in the properties and characteristics of each of them. The one, as we said before, is the fear of terror. The other is the fear of reverence. When under the one, we are looking unto self; and the apprehension is, lest a creature so sentient should be agonised by sufferings that are to come. When under the other, we are looking unto God; and the apprehension is, lest a Being so sacred should look with distaste and dissatisfaction towards us because of our present remaining sinfulness. When the one is awakened by a sense of God's displeasure, it is because of the vengeance which follows in its train. To the other there is a moral force in the displeasure, although there should be no vengeance. To conceive the distinction, might we imagine an earthly superior, whom we hold in reverence both for his rank and for his virtues. It might be a reverence wholly unaccompanied with terror. It might be a fear into which there enters no apprehension whatever of pains or of penalties. The loss simply of his good opinion were enough to awaken it—although there should be no physical loss or physical suffering incurred by it. A mere look of disapprobation from him, of whose respectability and worth we had the high imagination, like the look of Christ upon Peter, would, of itself, be felt to agonise all the better sensibilities of our nature.

It is not even necessary for this, that we should incur his displeasure by a violation of his legal rights. It were simply enough to have incurred his disesteem by a violation of moral rightness. It is not necessary that he should be offended with us, because we have robbed him of his dues. It were enough that he thought of us unfavourably, because we had fallen short of our own duties. Even though we had nothing to fear from his anger, still we should fear his disapprobation. A mere adverse judgment, although not followed up by any execution, would in itself be grievous to us. And such is the feeling of a Christian towards God. He stands not in the terror of any vengeance from His hands—yet he would feel an awe in the rebuke of His countenance. He trembles not under the uplifted arm of an injured Deity. Yet the disapproval of His omniscient eye, would in itself be dreadful to him. He is not frightened at the thought of any coming penalties—yet he is solemnized by the notice that God takes of him. In other words, the fear of terror is done away, but the fear of reverence survives it. A sense of God's mercy, as exhibited in the work of our redemption, has expelled the one. A sense of His holiness, also exhibited there, has enhanced and perpetuated the other. The two fears are distinct and dissimilar to the uttermost. The one is an animal—the other is a moral affection. The one, the fear of terror, will descend with the accursed into Hell, and have fulfilment there in the cries and agonies of the place of torment. The other, the fear of reverence, will be borne upward by the redeemed in Heaven, and will there pour a deeper and a graver melody into the adorations that compass the throne of the Eternal. Let us cease to wonder then, that the disciples of the New Testament are called upon to banish from their hearts the first affection, and to retain the second—that in one place, they should be reproached because of their fearfulness; and, in another, should be admonished to live all their days in the fear of God. The faith of the gospel harmonizes both these sentiments. It displaces terror. It heightens reverence.

This, so far from an unintelligible mystery, is exemplified in one of the most frequent and familiar relations of human life. Let the wife, says the apostle Paul, reverence her husband; but, while in subjection to him, says the apostle Peter, let her not be afraid with any amazement—or, as it means, with any terror or consternation. If ever you esteemed a man from whom you had nothing personally to fear—if ever the presence of a superior drew an homage of profoundest deference from your bosom, although you had nought of harm and nought of hostility to apprehend from him—if you have ever known what it was to have an awe cast upon your spi-

rits, when the dignity, whether of virtuous or intellectual greatness, stood before you, even though it beamed in placidness upon yourself—then you have had experimental proof in your own feelings of the distinction that we now labour to impress; and you have found how possible it is to be utterly free of all terror towards God, and yet to hold Him in deepest reverence.

Such is the wide difference between these two affections; and, corresponding to this, there is a difference equally wide between the legal and the evangelical dispensations. Under the former economy, the alternative to do this and live, is, that if you fail in doing this, you will perish everlastingly. Now let this be the great stimulus to the performance of virtue; and then think of the spirit and of the inward character, wherewith they are impregnated. It is in fact a character of the most intense selfishness. It is the fear of terror which goads him on to all his obedience, and compels him to act religiously—to walk the servile round of many outward conformities, and forcibly to refrain his hands from all outward and literal transgression. For such a religion as this, it is not needed, that he should have any capacity of moral principle. It is enough if he have the capacity of animal pain. He is driven along, not by the feelings of his spiritual, but by those of his sentient nature; and, instead of liberal or spontaneous piety, we behold, in the multitude of his operose but unwilling drudgeries, all the baseness of a sordid and superstitious devoteeship. That obedience which is given with a view to purchase, either the enjoyments of Heaven or exemption from the agonies of hell, may evince a taste for happiness; but this is altogether distinct from a taste for holiness—or it may evince a distaste for suffering, but this is not a distaste for sin. It is thus that we hold the legal economy to be not more adverse to the comfort, than it is to the character of man. It taints and vitiates the morality which it professes to idolize. It puts the alloy of an ignoble quality into all its services. Its constant demand is for virtue—on which however it inflicts the utmost degradation—causing principle to sink into prudence; and transforming him who might else have been a generous aspirant after the excellence that is godlike, into a morose and mercenary hireling.—So that, instead of loving righteousness for itself, or of hating iniquity for itself, he wretchedly drivels at the services of the one, and only for the promised reward; and represses his desires towards the other, only because of the threatened vengeance.

Now it is not so with the economy of the gospel. The gate of Heaven is thrown open at the outset to its disciples; and they were invited with confident step to walk towards it. God holds Himself forth not as a Judge who reckons, but as a Father who is reconciled to them. A deed of remission for the sins that are past is put into their hands; and whereas before, they, under a sense of guilt, may have been troubled at the sight of God's offended sacredness, they have now beneath the covert of an ample and to them freely extended mediatorship, taken their secure refuge from the storm. The fear of terror ought now to have no place in hearts, occupied by a grateful and rejoicing love, that should cast it away from them; but there is nothing in this transition from Nature to Grace, nothing in this renouncing of our own righteousness and relying on Christ as our alone Saviour, nothing in this change of the legal for the evangelical, that is fitted to extinguish—there is every thing to enhance within us the fear of reverence. When God is seen by us in the face of Christ, He is seen in the brightness of His mercy to the sinful; but it is a mercy so accompanied with holiness and truth, so enshrined as it were in the high honours of a vindicated law, as to throw over the character of the Godhead a deeper sacredness than before. In that halo which is over the mercy-seat of Christianity, there is a radiance of all the attributes. Along with the love which gladdens every believer's heart, there is an august and awful majesty to solemnize it, and while in this wondrous spectacle, we behold peace to the sinner—yet, seen as it is through the mystery of a world's atonement, we there too behold the evil of sin in most full and appalling demonstration. While the sinner looked upon all this as the fire of Heaven's jealousy, directed against himself, to burn up and fierce.y to destroy, there was but room

in his heart for the one affection of single and overwhelming terror. But when seen as it is, averted from us because discharged upon Him who for our sake sustained the agonies of the garden and of the cross, he can look on without the fear of terror—yet it is impossible to look intelligently on without the fear of deepest reverence. It is a like difference with that which obtains between the sight of a volcano from a place of exposure, and from a place of safety. In the one there are the emotions of an absorbing terror, in a mind occupied with self. In the other there are the emotions of an admiring taste, in a mind occupied with the scene of contemplation. But for the full enjoyment of this scene, a degree of conscious security is indispensable. A sense of danger would disturb, and despair would utterly destroy it; and not without a certain belief of personal safety, would the fine sensibilities of taste have their play in the spectator's bosom. His soul must be in a state of repose, ere it can reflect those characters of grandeur or of gracefulness which lie on the panorama before it; nor could it take on a true impression of its varied imagery, if ruffled by apprehension, or, still more, if tempest-driven among the hazards of the fiery torrent and of the earthquake. There would be one engrossing sensibility that dispossessed all others; and, till it was hushed by a sense of protection and of safety, neither the graces nor the sublimities of a perspective so marvellous could have any charm for his imagination—alike insensible to the gorgeousness that blazed upon the mountain-top, or to the verdant beauty that smiled around its base.

It is just so in reference to God—more terrible as He is to the sinner's eye, than the fiercest and most menacing volcano, when viewed only in the light of an incensed lawgiver. The sinner is at that time otherwise employed, than in an admiring survey of the beauty or the nobleness of the Divine character. His great concern is about himself. His overwhelming anxiety is about his own prospects. He has not time, or at least he has not tranquillity, among the agitations of a perturbed spirit, for what may be called a contemplative study of the Godhead. And as in our case of illustration, all the tasteful sensibilities were in abeyance, while death and destruction were conceived to be at hand—so all the moral sensibilities towards God are equally in abeyance, when the mind is engrossed with the dread of his vengeance, or looks onward to that frightful eternity which is in reserve for the children of ungodliness.

It is by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by it alone, that this check on the moral sensibilities of our heart towards God is removed. It assures safety and peace to the sinner; and he, looking to the atonement of the cross, can at once rejoice in the fulness of the divine mercy, and do profoundest reverence to the unabated dignity of the Sovereign. The grace and the greatness of the Divinity are alike open to his view; and whereas before, the terrors of a guilty selfishness had within him their sole occupation, rescued from these, he can now look calmly and intelligently on; and it is when so employed, that the susceptibilities of his moral nature are awakened to one and all of the perfections of the Godhead. It is when he thus looks unto God, that he becomes like unto God—even by the moral radiance of Him who is adored, now calling back a kindred reflection from the serene and steadfast countenance of him who is the adorer. It is thus that that assimilating process which shall be perfected in Heaven, where we shall be altogether like unto God, for there we shall see Him as He is, has its commencement and its progress upon earth—for even now, beholding as with open face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Let us now conclude this part of our argument with two practical reflections.

First, we doubt that there may be some here present, who are alike strangers both to the one fear and the other—as little struck by the terror of God's wrath, as they are solemnized into reverence by the worth and the moral excellence which belong to Him. This we hold to be the general habit of men in the world. They stand in no need of a gospel to soothe them, and just because the law never scared them. They are listless, in truth, and most profoundly asleep to both terms of this big alternative; and, if not ani-

mated into hope by any sense of reality in the offers of mercy, neither can they sink into despondency by any sense of reality in the coming vengeance. The present existence is their all; and as to its issues in a yet unknown and untravelled scene, they think not at all and they care not at all. The Bible declaration that by nature they are the children of wrath, does not move them. The testimony of their own conscience that they are living without God in the world, does not awaken them. The daily remembrancers which meet them on their way, and speak to them with a force of animation which there is no evading, of the death that is so surely and so speedily awaiting them, carry not forward their thoughts to the judgment that is also awaiting them. Meanwhile time runs on with unaltered footsteps; and the cycles of Heaven, as they roll over-head, witness the follies and the heedlessness of each successive day, to be as inveterate as of the day that went before it; and not more steadfastly than these perform their wonted revolutions in the firmament above, does many a poor child of infatuation below persist in the courses of a deep and determined worldliness. And so with thousands and thousands more, there is never so much as one fearful anticipation in time, of that which has its dread fulfilment in eternity. For God is not to be mocked. The unchanging principles of His moral administration are not to be tampered with. The sanctions of His outraged law are not to be nullified, but must have their emphatic vindication —for sooner shall nature expire than the high jurisprudence of God shall be trampled on—Heaven and Earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of His law shall fail.

Secondly—Let us hope that there are some here present, who have known what it was to be practically in earnest because of these things; and who feeling a significancy both in the threats of that law which they have violated, and in the invitations of that gospel which has held out to them a sanctuary and a hiding-place from the storm, have there cast the anchor of their hope, and now rejoice that they are safe. Theirs is in no way the joy of those who feel that they can sin with impunity. It is true that they count upon forgiveness, but not forgiveness in such a way as marks the indifference of the Godhead to sin, but forgiveness in such a way as manifests His entire and unbroken sacredness. In that atonement by which the vengeance of a broken law has been averted from themselves, they still behold the demonstration of God's antipathy to evil; and if not actuated as heretofore by the terror of His power, still they are actuated by the deepest reverence for the perfections of His moral nature. They are not exempted from service under the economy of the gospel. Only it is service, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit. Still it is service; and it should be no longer a mystery, that they, who, in one sense of the term are called upon to serve God without fear, are, in another sense of it, called upon to perfect their holiness in the fear of the Lord. You will perceive by this, how much more pure and generous and noble, the evangelical is than the legal virtue—the one in fact being rendered, in truckling exchange for the remuneration which it aims after; the other, already in possession of that ample remuneration which has been won by the Mediator for all who believe, rendered as a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty. It is thus that faith, of all principles the most maligned and misunderstood by the world, not only pacifies the conscience of the sinner, but purifies all the springs of his obedience—so that, instead of a drivelling servility towards the Master of whom he is in dread, it is the willing homage of his duteous and delighted subordination towards the Father whom he holds in utmost reverence.

SERMON XXIV.

Immortality brought to light by the Gospel.

Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."—2 Tim. i. 10.

The men of the earth carry on their designs and their doings, just as if on earth they were to live for ever. Each is so intent upon his own earthly object —every mind is so occupied with its own earthly scheme—every countenance speaks such deep and eager anxiety after some favourite yet earthly ambition—each individual is so decidedly embarked, with all his powers of attention and perseverance, on some earthly undertaking —That surely one might think, it can be nought of a trifling or temporary nature, which either creates or keeps up so mighty a stir among our species. And yet it is not the less true, that all the busy activities of all these people have their upshot in forgetfulness. It is not the greatness or the durability of the objects, which has called forth the effort and the strenuousness of men. It is the folly of men, which urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our few little years, and has invested time with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify; and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations from the face of our world, reigns with unabated strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever.

Death is a theme of mighty import; and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted, upon the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate together, that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give forth the lesson of their mortality. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and with rude hand tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year death breaks up its families; and the society of our early days is fast melting away from us. Is it a market place? Death works among the people at short and rapid intervals; and though at the end of twenty years, I see a crowd as busy and as numerous as before—these are new faces which meet my eye, and new names which fall upon my ear. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them. Is it the country at large? On every side we see a shifting population—another set of occupiers to the farms, and other names or other men annexed to the properties.

But this is viewing the subject at a distance. Every assemblage of objects is composed of individuals; and think of the numbers that must have suffered, to accomplish the changes which we have now set before you. Think that each of these individuals carried in his bosom a living principle, and that that principle is now to all appearance extinguished—that each felt as warm and as alive to the world as perhaps any who now hears me, and that this world the stern severity of death forced him to abandon for ever—that each was as feelingly open to pain and to terror, and that the forebodings and the reluctance and the agonies of death came upon all of them—that each had hopes and plans and wishes to accomplish, but that death carried him away; and they are all buried in forgetfulness along with him.

All is vanity, says the preacher; and it is death which stamps this character on the affairs of the world. It throws a mockery on all that is human. It frustrates the wisest plans, and absolutely converts them into nothingness. All the ecstacies of pleasure, all the splendours of fame, all the triumphs of ambition, all the joys of domestic tenderness, all the eye can look for or the heart aspire

after—this, this is their affecting termination. Death absorbs all—it annihilates all. Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and as noisy as we. The loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings; and in the busy occupation of their callings, they had their days of labour, and their nights of thoughtful anxiety. The world carried on it then the same face of activity as now; and where are the men who kept it up in their allotted generation? They are where we shall soon follow them. They have gone to sleep; but it is the sleep of death. Their bed is a coffin in which they are mouldering. The garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life; but is now lying in loose and scattered fragments, among the earth of their grave.

And it does aggravate our hopelessness of escape from death, when we look to the wide extent and universality of its ravages. We see no exception. It scatters its desolations with unsparing cruelty among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It perhaps adds to our despair, when we see it extending to the other animals. Every thing that has life dies; and even the lovely forms of the vegetable creation dissolve into nothing. It appears to be the condition of every organic being; and so looks as if it were some tremendous necessity, under which we have nothing for it but helplessly to acquiesce. It carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law. Man can look for no mitigation to the big and incurable distress. He cannot reverse the processes of Nature, nor bid her mighty elements obey him.

Is there no power then superior to Nature, and which can control her? To us a law of the universe carries the idea of some fixed and inalienable necessity along with it; and none more certain, more unvarying and more widely extended in its operation, than the law of death. In the wide circuit of things, does there exist no high authority which can abolish this law?—no power which can overthrow death, and spoil him of his principality?—no being travelling in the greatness of his strength, who can grapple this mighty monarch and break his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that Being. But the records of past ages have come down to us; and we there read of an extraordinary visitor who lighted on these realms, where death has reigned so long in all the triumphs of undivided empire. Wonderful enterprise, He came to destroy death. Vast undertaking, He came to depose Nature from her conceived immutability. He came to shift her processes—and a law that embraced in its wide grasp all which lives and moves on the face of the world, he came to overturn it. And He soon gave tokens of a power commensurate to the mighty undertaking. That Nature, to whose operations we are so apt to ascribe some stubborn and invincible necessity, gave way at His coming. She felt His authority through all her elements, and she obeyed it. Wonderful period, when the constancy of Nature was broke in upon by Him who established it—when the Deity vindicated His honours; and the miracles of a single age, committed to authentic history, gave evidence to all futurity that there is a Power above Nature and beyond it. What more unchanging than the aspect of the starry Heavens; in what quarter of her dominions does Nature maintain a more silent and solemn inflexibility, than in the orbs which roll around us? Yet at the coming of the mighty Saviour, these Heavens broke silence. Music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a concord of living voices, which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language upon human ears. After this, who can call Nature unalterable? Jesus Christ while he tarried on earth made perpetual invasions upon her constancy; and she never in a single instance, resisted the word of His power. What manner of man is this, said his disciples, who can make the wind and the seas obey him? Philosophers love to expatiate; and they tell us of the laws of the animal and the vegetable kingdom. These laws may prove an impassable barrier to us, but in the hand of the omnipotent Saviour they were nothing. He reversed or suspended them at pleasure. He blasted the fig tree by a single word; and, what to us was the dawn of some high anticipation, He made man the subject of His

miracles. He restored sight to the blind. He restored speech to the dumb. He restored motion to the palsied. And to crown His triumph over Nature and her processes, He restored life to the dead. He laid down His own life, and He took it up again. The disciples gave up all for lost, when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of that very mortality, which He promised to destroy. It was like the revenge and the victory of Nature, over Him who had so often prevailed against her. But it was only to make His triumph more illustrious. He died and was buried; but He rose again. He re-entered that mysterious bourne, from which it has been said that no traveller ever returns; but He did. He burst asunder the mighty barriers of the grave. He re-entered and reanimated that body which expired on the cross; and by that most striking of all testimonies, His own unaltered form emerging from the tomb, He has given us to know, that He fought against the law of death and He carried it.

But man not only wants power to achieve his own immortality, He also wants light to discover it. If such, in spite of every appalling exhibition to the contrary, is really to be the ultimate state of man, this doctrine is not brought to light by reason. The text indeed says as much, in saying that it is brought to light by the gospel. It represents this great truth as dark by Nature, and only made clear by Revelation. It seems to cast discredit on all the arguments of science in behalf of a future state; and, just for want of a sufficient basis in the evidence of Philosophy on which to rear this noble anticipation, it would rest and establish it chiefly on the evidence of faith.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first advert to what may be called the physical state, and then to the moral state of the mind; and under each head, let us endeavour to contrast the insufficiency of the light of nature, with the sufficiency and fulness of the light of the gospel.

I. An argument for its immortality has been drawn from the consideration of what we should term the physics of the mind—that is, from the consideration of its properties, when it is regarded as having a separate or substantive being of its own. For example it has been said that spirit is not matter, and therefore must be imperishable. We confess that we see not the force of this reasoning. We are not sure by nature of the premises; and neither do we apprehend how the conclusion flows from it. We think ourselves familiar with the subtleties and the scholastics that have been uttered upon the subject. To us they are far from satisfactory; nor can we perceive aught of that evidence, on which we rest our belief in any coming event or coming state of the futurity which lies before us—we can perceive no such force of practical evidence in those abstract or metaphysic generalities, which are employed to demonstrate the endurance or rather the indestructibleness of the thinking principle—so as to be persuaded, that it shall indeed survive the dissolution of the body, and shall separately maintain its consciousness and its powers on the other side of the grave.

Now, in the recorded fact of our Saviour's resurrection, we see what many would call a more popular; but what we should deem a far more substantial and satisfactory argument for the soul's immortality, than any that is furnished by the speculation which we have now alluded to. To us the one appears as much superior to the other, as History is more solid than Hypothesis, or as Experience is of a texture more firm than Imagination, or as the Philosophy of our modern Bacon, is of a surer and sounder character than the Philosophy of the old school men. Now it is upon the fact of His own resurrection that Christ rests the hope and the promise of resurrection to all of us. If He be not risen from the dead, says one of His apostles, we are of all men the most miserable. It is to this fact, that he appeals as the foundation and the hope of immortality. To every cavil and to every difficulty he opposes the emphatic argument, that Christ has risen. This was Paul's argument; and it has descended by inheritance to us. We have received the testimony. We have access to the documents. We can take a view of the unexampled evidence which has been carried down to us upon the vehicles of history; and in opposition

to all which fancy or speculation can muster against us, we can appeal to the fact. It is not a doctrine excogitated by the ingenuities of human reasoning. It is a doctrine submitted to the observation of the human senses. It is not an untried experiment. While Jesus Christ lived, He made it repeatedly, and with unvaried success, upon others; and, in giving up His body to the cross, He made it upon Himself. One who could carry an experiment such as this to a successful termination, has a claim to be listened to; and He tells by the mouth of an apostle, that the fact of Himself having risen, bears most decisively upon the doctrine that we shall rise also. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Let it be remarked, before we conclude this head of discourse, that the word which we render "abolished," signifies also, "made of no effect." The latter interpretation of the word is certainly more applicable to our first or our temporal death. He has not abolished temporal death. It still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off its successive generations with as great sureness and rapidity as ever. This part of the sentence is not abolished, but it is rendered ineffectual. Death still lays us in the grave; but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness. It puts its cold hand upon every one of us; but a power mightier than death will lift it off, and these frames be again reanimated with all the warmth of life and of sentiment. The church-yard has been called the land of silence; and silent it is indeed to those who occupy it. The Sabbath bell is no longer heard; nor yet the tread of the living population above them. But though removed from the hearing of every earthly sound, yet shall they hear the sound of the last trumpet. It shall enter the loneliness of their dwellings, and be heard through Death's remotest caverns. When we open the sepulchres of the men of other times, the fragments of skeletons and the mouldering of bones form indeed a humiliating spectacle. But the working of the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, shall raise corruption to a comelier form, and invest it in all the bloom and vigour of immortality. So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

II. But another argument for the immortality of man, has been drawn by philosophers from the moral state of his mind; and more especially from that progressive expansion, which they affirm it to have undergone, in respect of its virtues as well as of its powers. Still we fear, that, in respect of this argument too, the flowery description of the moralists has no proof, and more particularly no experience to support it. There is a beauty we do confess in many of their representations; but beauty is only for them who sit at ease. It is a cruel mockery to the man who is surrounded by the agonies of a death-bed; and has in his immediate view, the dread images of annihilation or vengeance. Yes! we have heard them talk, and with eloquence too, of the good man and of his prospects —of his progress in life being a splendid career of virtue, and of his death being a gentle transition to another and a better world—of its being the goal where he reaps the honourable reward that is due to his accomplishments, or being little more than a step in his proud march to eternity. This is all very fine, but it is the fineness of poetry. Where is the evidence of its being any better than a deceitful imagination?

We might believe that there was something real in this stately progression to eternity, if we saw it; but we see it not. Why so cruel an interruption to the progress? What means this awful and mysterious death? Why is the good man not suffered to carry on in his triumphant progress; and how comes this dark and inexplicable event, to be interposed between him and the full accomplishment of his destiny? You may

choose to call it a step; but there is no virtue in a name to quell our suspicion. It bears in every circumstance all the marks of a termination. We see the gradual decay of those faculties, which you tell us, but tell us falsely, are ripening and expanding. We see those virtues which you have represented as in a state of constant perseverance—we see them giving way to the power of disease—we see them withering into feebleness; and, instead of that which confers grace or dignity on man, we see the peevishness, the discontent, the fretfulness of age. We see the body bending to the dust. We see it extended in all the agony of helplessness and pain. To call this a triumphant procession to eternity—or to disguise those actual horrors which the ear hears and the eye witnesses, by the gildings of a flimsy imagination! We observe the emission of the last breath; and, whether the spirit is extinguished or fled to another residence, Nature tells us not—but when the academic declaimer talks of his fancied career of perfection, we should lift the honest front of experience against him, and call upon him to reveal to us the mystery of death. How comes an event so unseemly to meet the hero of immortality, on the path he was treading with such security and triumph? What the purpose of such an interruption at all? Why has the being, whom they would proudly assimilate to angels, such an ordeal to undergo? Why like them does he not flourish in perpetual vigour? And how shall we explain that mighty change, with all its affecting accompaniments of reluctance and agony and despair?

Death gives the lie to all the speculations of all the moralists; but it only gives evidence and consistency to the statements of the gospel. The doctrines of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with the rough and vigorous lessons of experience. They attempt no ornament and no palliation. They give the truth in all its severity—nor do they attempt to strew flowers around the sepulchre, or pour a deceitful perfume into the rottenness of the grave. Were a physician to take up my case, and speak lightly of my ailments, while I knew that a consuming disease was working and making progress within me, I should have no confidence in him, or in his remedies. I should like him to see the mischief in its full extent, that the medicine applied may be such as to meet and to combat with it. Now Christ the Physician of souls has taken up their disease in all its malignity. There is no softening, no disguise, in the representation of His messengers. Their account of death accords with our experience of it. What they tell us of death, is what we feel it to be—not that thing of triumph, which out of Christianity and beyond the circle of its influence it never is; but a thing of distress, and horror, and unnatural violence. He who is weak enough to be carried along by the false and the flimsy eloquence of sentimental moralists, might be led to believe that the man who dies is only sinking gently to repose, or winging his way to a triumphant eternity. But the Bible tells us differently—that out of Christ there is no triumph and no gentleness about it. It talks of the sting, and of the pains, and of the fear of death; and what we feel and know of the shrinkings of nature, proves that it has experience on its side. And the book which characterizes so truly death in itself, is worthy at least of our attention, when it treats of death in its moral or spiritual bearings.

Death then, as it appears to the eye of the senses, is but the extinction of that life which we now live in the world; but death, as revealed to us in Scripture, is the effect and the sentence of sin. Sin is the root of the mischief; and it is a mischief which Scripture represents as stretching in malignity and duration, far beyond the ken of the senses. Had we no other guide than our senses, we might conceive death to be a mere annihilation; and the utter destruction of their being, to be the whole amount of the calamity inflicted upon sinners. But distinct from this death of the body, there is what may be termed the death of the soul—not a death which consists in the extinction of its consciousness, for the conscience of guilt will keep by it for ever—not a death which implies the cessation of feeling, for to feeling it will continue to be all alive, though the feeling of intense suffering—not a death by which all sense of God will be expunged, for the sense of God' offended countenance will abide by it and

agonize it through all eternity. He who undergoes this second, this spiritual death, does not thereby cease to have life; but he ceases to have that favor of God which is better than life. He lives it is true, but it is the life of an exile from hope and from happiness. He lives, but it is in a state of hopeless distance from the fountain of living water. God is at enmity towards him; and in his own heart there is enmity towards God. This at least is the death of enjoyment. It is the death of all those pleasures, and of all those perceptions, which belong to a right moral state of existence. In this sense truly the soul is dead, though alive and most pungently alive to the corrosions of that worm which dieth not. In this sense there has been a quenching of its life, though all awake to the pain and the anguish of the fire that is not quenched. The temporal death is only the portal to sorer calamities. All who sin shall die; but this is not the conclusion of the sentence. All who die in sin shall live in torment.

Now it promises well for our Saviour's treatment of this sore malady—that He hath as it were placed Himself at the source of the mischief, and there made head against it. He has combated the radical force and virulence of the disease. He has probed it to the bottom. He has grappled with sin in its origin and its principle. He has taken it away—for by the sacrifice of Himself on the accursed tree, He has expiated its guilt; and, by the operation of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, He is rooting out its existence. Had He only put together the fragments of my body, and recalled my soul to its former tenement—He would have done nothing. Sin, both in its power and in its condemnation, would have claimed me as its own—and, in dreary banishment from God, it would have recalled me to life, but a life of misery; and stamped on me immortality, but an immortality of despair. But the Author of the gospel has swept off the whole burden of the calamity. He has made a decisive thrust into the very heart and principle of the disease. He has destroyed sin, for He has both cancelled the sentence and washed away the pollution; and, by the accomplishment of a mystery which angels desire to look into, He brings sinners unto God, where they shall ever rejoice in the purest light and the happiest immortality.

To estimate aright the new moral existence into which Christ ushers every sinner who receives Him,—we have only to reflect how it is that every sinner, apart from Christ, stands towards God. He is either immersed in deep oblivion and unconcern, and so may well be accounted dead to the Being who made and who upholds him; or if his conscience be at all awake to a true sense of his delinquencies from the law, he must view the lawgiver with a feeling of dread and discomfort and jealousy. There is a wide gulph of alienation between him and his Maker; and the habitual the haunting apprehension of God's displeasure towards him, engenders in him back again a habitual dislike towards God. There is no community of affection or confidence betwixt them; and pursued as he is by a conviction of guilt, which he cannot resist and cannot escape from, he imagines a scowl on the aspect of the Divinity—an awful barrier of separation, by which he is hopelessly and irrecoverably exiled from the sacred throne of the Eternal. His spirit is not at ease. It is glad to find relief, in the day-dreams of a passing world, from those solemn realities, the thought of which so agitates and disquiets it. It seeks an opiate in the things of sense and time, against the disturbance which it finds in the things of eternity; and so, cradled in profoundest lethargy, it, while alive unto the world, is dead unto God.

We cannot imagine a greater revolution in the heart, than that which would ensue on the burden of this distrust or of this apathy being done away—when, instead of viewing God with terror, or shrinking from the thought of Him, the sinner would steadfastly gaze upon His reconciled countenance, and be assured of the complacency and the good-will that were graven thereupon. Now a simple faith in the glad tidings of the gospel is competent to achieve this. It would loosen the spirit's bondage, by merely transforming the aspect of the Divinity from that of an enemy to that of a friend. It would change our indifference or our hatred into love; and this

affection, from the central the presiding place which it occupies, would subordinate the whole man, and so utterly change his moral system as to make a new creature of him. The faith of the gospel is something more than the germ of a new hope. It is the germ of a new heart, and so of a new character. The believer's taste and sensibilities are now awake to objects, to which before he was utterly dead; or from which he wont to recoil with strong and sensitive aversion. In other words, he has become alive to these objects. He expatiates on another theatre of contemplation; and he rejoices in other scenes and other prospects than before. He has lost his relish for that in which he formerly delighted. He delights in that for which formerly he had no relish. It is just as if old senses had been extinguished, and as if new ones had been substituted in their place. If he is not ushered into life for the first time he is at least ushered into a new mode of life for the first time. He undergoes preferment from the animal to the spiritual life; and this life, with the immortality annexed to it, is not only made clear by the gospel—but faith in the gospel may be said to have created it.

Now all this is the doing of the Saviour. I cannot trust the physician who plays upon the surface of my disease, and throws over it the disguise of false colouring. I have more confidence to put in him, who, like Christ the Physician of my soul, has looked the malady fairly in the face,—has taken it up in all its extent, and in all its soreness—has resolved it into its original principles—has probed it to the very bottom; and has set himself forward to combat with the radical elements of the disease. This is what the Saviour has done with death. He has plucked it of its sting. He has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity operates. It was sin which constituted the virulence in the disease, and he hath extracted it. He hath put it away. He hath expiated the sentence; and the believer, rejoicing in the assurance that all is clear with God, serves Him without fear in righteousness and in holiness all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer in force, against us who believe. The Saviour took the sentence upon Himself. He bore our iniquity. He became sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The sentence is no longer in force against us. The Saviour has cancelled it; and he has done more than this. He has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has extinguished its power. He reigns in the heart of the believer. He sweeps it of all its corruptions. He takes it such as it is—He makes it such as it should be. He brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification—so that while he lives he adds one degree of grace unto another—when he dies he rejoices in hope of the coming glory—when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unreprovable in the sight of God and of His Saviour. In the whole of this treatment, I see the skill and intelligence and superior management of a physician who is up to the disease; and knows where the main force of its malignity lies—who has a thorough insight into the principle of the mischief, and has reached forward an appropriate remedy to confront it—who, to abolish death, has directed the strength of His attack against sin which is its origin—who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice—and who is destroying its power and its existence, by the operation of that mighty spirit, whereby He can break down the corruption of the human heart and subdue it unto all righteousness.

Believe this done; and the veil is thrown aside which separates you from the glories of heaven—the way lies clear and open before you; and light, pure and satisfying light, gives the highest evidence and splendour to the great doctrine of life and immortality. The grand mystery is resolved. The barrier which kept the sinner at a distance from God is levelled and put away. That barrier was sin; and Christ, by the mighty instruments of His sacrifice and His spirit, has overthrown it. But a victory over sin is a victory over death. Where sin hath no longer any dominion, death hath no longer any claim; and that mighty Being who spoiled principalities and powers hath abolished death, because He conquered sin. True, it still reigns in these mortal bodies; and till the new

system of things be established, it will scatter its desolation over the surface of the world. But the new system is preparing. A place is fitting up in Heaven, for those to whom our Saviour hath given the assurance, that, in His Father's house there are many mansions; and on earth, the Spirit is now working in the hearts of the destined occupiers, and making them meet for the inheritance. These vile bodies must be put off; and others put on, over which death shall have no power. They will persist in bloom and in vigour to eternity. Mighty change in the constitution of the species—mighty change in the material system around us—mighty change in the souls of men, as well as in the bodies which they animate. The bodies we now wear shall moulder into dust—the earth we now tread upon shall be burnt up—the heavens we now gaze at shall pass away as a scroll—But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the beings who live in it shall never die.

Before we conclude, let us refer your attention to the grand agent in this wonderful restoration of a fallen world. The work is His, and it is His only. We must take Him not as a fellow-helper in the cause, but as the Captain of our salvation. It was He who trode the winepress alone. His was all the contest, and to Him be all the triumph. Let no man offer to usurp or to share it with Him. To Him belongs the work of our redemption, in all its extent and in all its particulars. It was His sacrifice which redeemed us from the punishment of sin; and it is His spirit which redeems us from its pollution. And we contend that man is not in the right attitude for receiving the mighty benefit, till he has cast down all his lofty imaginations, and resigned himself with gratitude and quietness into the Saviour's hands. "Here I am under the twofold misery, of having been a sinner in time past, and being a sinner still—of having incurred a sentence which I cannot expiate, and of persevering in a path of destruction which I cannot turn from. The case in all its helplessness, and in all its difficulties, I make over wholly to the Saviour. I may as well try to level yonder mountain, as try to master it by my own independent exertions. I obey the invitation of the Saviour—'Come unto me'—I put the case into His hand; and, if I do it in the assured hope that His redemption will provide for it, I shall not be disappointed. If I offer Him the case, He will not refuse to take it up. 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' He takes up the case which I have submitted to Him. He examines it in its two leading particulars. I cannot expiate the sentence; but the blood of His atonement can do it for me. I cannot turn from the paths of sin; but He can turn me by His grace—He can reign in me by His spirit—so that though without Him I can do nothing—yet with Him for my strengthener and my friend I can do all things." This then is the finished work, the complete salvation of Jesus Christ. "Whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life." Believe, and you will come forth with alacrity at His call. From the contemplation of your own nothingness, you will cast yourself upon the Saviour and upon His sufficiency. You will make an entire and unconditional surrender of yourselves to Him; and be assured, that, from the first moment of your doing so, there will emerge the new hope of the redeemed, and the new life of the sanctified disciple.

And you Christians, who have sat at His table—who have eaten of that bread which is the symbol of His body, and drunk of that wine which is the symbol of His blood—be assured, that, if you have done so, with all the spirituality of a firm and believing dependence on Him as your Saviour, upon you shall the whole of this great redemption be accomplished. You have brought your bodies into contact with the elements of the ordinance; and if you have brought your minds into contact with the things represented by these elements, we can state to you in decisive language what will be the fruit of such fellowship. God is not unfaithful who hath called you unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and we can assert, upon the fidelity of God, upon the unfailing promises of Heaven, upon the strength of a high and unchangeable attribute, upon that truth of the Deity which is printed on all His works, and shines through all His revelations—In a

word, we can assert upon the solemn asseveration, nay, upon the oath of the Divinity Himself, that all who believe in His Son shall have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Such is the hope of your calling. Hold it firm and fast even unto the end; and the bed of death will be to you a scene of triumph—the last messenger will be a messenger of joy; and those bright images of peace and rapture and elevation, which, out of Christ, are the mere fabrication of the fancy, will, in Christ, be found to have a reality and a fulfilment, which shall bear you up in the midst of your dying agonies, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is no longer an idle declamation now. There is many a minister of Christ who could give you experience for it. He can take you to the house of mourning—to the mansion of pain and of sickness—to the chamber of the dying man. He can draw aside the curtain which covers the last hours of the good man's existence, and show you how a Christian can die. He can ask you to bend your ear, and to catch the faltering accents of praise and of piety. What meaneth that joy in the midst of suffering—that hope in the midst of breathlessness and pain—that elevation in the midst of cruellest agonies? It is not his own merit which sustains him.—It is the merit of a benevolent Saviour. It is not a sense of his own righteousness which gives intrepidity to his expiring bosom. It is the righteousness of Christ. It is the hope of being found in Him, and a sense of the grace and forgiveness which he has received through His hands. In a word it is Christ who resolves the mystery. It is His presence which throws tranquillity and joy around the scene of distress. It is He who administers vigour to the dying man; and, while despair sits on every countenance, and relatives are weeping around him, He enables him to leave them all with this exulting testimony—O death where is thy sting—O grave where is thy victory!

SERMON XXV.

The Brevity of Human Life.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short."—1 Cor. vii. 29.

The affirmation of the text may be tried by a most distinct arithmetic. The average of man's life is numerically known. And should there be an overweening confidence to carry our hopes beyond this average, the maximum of life is numerically known. And, to balance the uncertainty whether our days upon earth may not greatly exceed the average, there is an equal uncertainty whether they may not as greatly fall short of it. There is no point, from its origin downwards, in which death may not lay his arrest on the current of human existence; and as if the whole domain of humanity were his own, does he go forth at large from one extreme to the other of it; nor is there a single portion of the territory, on which, with free and unfaltering footstep, he may not enter. In the churchyard, we see graves of every dimension. This land of silence is far more densely peopled by young than by old—proving that through all the departments of life, whether of age, or of youth, or of infancy, the arrows of this mighty destroyer flee at random. Parents have oftener to weep over their children's tomb, than children have to carry their parents to that place, where lies the mouldering heap of the generations that have already gone by. So that on the side of our text, we have the clearest lights both of arithmetic and of experience; and one would think it superfluous to hold any parley with the understanding, on a topic of which the proof is so overpowering.

Why, it may be thought, should we be anxious in urging a truth, which may

safely be left to its own evidence? or take occasion strenuously and repeatedly to affirm, what none is able to deny? And this is just the marvellous anomaly of our nature, which it is so difficult to explain. In the face of all this evidence, and in utter opposition to the judgment which is extorted thereby, there is an obstinate practical delusion, that resides most constantly within the hearts, and rules most imperiously over the habits of the vast majority of our species. It is not that we are incapable of all influence from futurity; for it is the future gain of the present adventure, or the future issue of the present arrangement, or the future result of the present contrivance, that sets about the whole of human activity agoing. But it is to the future death, and to the future condition on the other side of it, that we are so strangely insensible. We are all in the glow and bustle and eagerness of most intense expectation, about the events that lie on the intermediate distance between us and death; and as blind to the certainty of the death itself, as if this distance stretched indefinitely onward in the region of anticipation before us, or as if it were indeed an eternity. There is a busy fitful and unsettled dream into which the world has been lulled as if by fascination; and out of which neither the moan of frequent death-beds, nor the daily tolling of the funeral bell, nor the constant breaking down of existing families, nor the piece-meal falling away of the old society, nor the building up of a new one in its place—we say that there is a deep sleep upon our world, out of which the whole noise and turmoil and terror of these incessant changes, have been totally unable to awaken us.

Nor do we expect of a new utterance about the brevity of time, that it will awaken you. For this purpose, there must be the putting forth of a force that is supernatural; and the most experimental demonstration we know of this necessity, is the torpor of the human soul about death, and the tenacity wherewith it stands its ground against the most pathetic and the most palpable exhibitions of it. We are never more assured of man, that he is wholly sold over to the captivity of this world, than on witnessing the strong adherence of his heart to it, under the most touching experiences of its vanity—than on perceiving how unmoved he is out of all his earthliness, whether he go from burials to business, or from business back again to burials—than on observing how, after having carried a neighbour to his grave, and there trod as it were on the confines of the world, he will turn him again with a devotedness as intense and as unbroken to its concerns and companies as before. We affirm, that of the spell which binds him to earth, no power within the compass of nature is able to disenchant him—that argument will not—and the inroads of mortality on his own dwelling-place will not—and sermons poured forth over the closing grave of the dearest of his family will not—and the evident approaches of the last messenger to his own person will not—And it is indeed a most affecting spectacle to behold, amid the warnings and the symptoms of a dissolution which so speedily awaits him, that he just hugs more closely to his heart that world, which is on the eve of being torn away from his embraces for ever. Give me then a man who is actually alive to the realities of faith; and the inference from all this is, that another power than that of the experience of nature over the feelings of nature, must have been put forth to quicken him. There is not within the compass of all that is visible, any cause competent to the working of such an effect upon the human spirit. The power which awakens it to a sense of spiritual things, cometh from a spiritual quarter. There is nought in the world that is present, which can bring a human soul under the dominion of the world that is to come. One would have thought, that the failures and the fluctuations of time might have shaken the heart of man out of its devotedness to time, and shifted its regards to eternity. But it would appear not. The mere destruction of our earthly dependence, is not enough, to shift our desires and our dependence to that which is heavenly. The losses and the desolations which attach to the life of sense, and the certainty of all its joys and interests being speedily and totally swept away—these it would appear, will not of themselves germinate within us the life of faith The unmoved earthliness of the soul

amid all the pathos, and warning, and menace, and solemn instruction of those affecting changes, which our earth so convincingly exhibits—this, of itself, demonstrates the need that there is, for the might and the mystery of a higher agent, to transform that which is carnal into that which is spiritual. In a word, the decay and the dissolution of all that is below, have no effect in raising the downward tendencies of the heart, which is only cradled thereby into more sunken infatuation, and strangely cleaves with more tenacity to a scene, on which the characters of littleness, and frailty, and rapid evanescence stand so palpably engraven. This wondrous phenomenon of our nature, convinces us of the doctrine of regeneration. It informs us that no treatment short of this, is able to spiritualize us—that ere our affections can be set on the things which are above, an influence from above must descend upon them; or ere we become alive to the unfading glories and the ethereal delights of the upper sanctuary, there must come down from that sanctuary, the light and the power of a special revelation.

There is a real and a most momentous distinction, between the children of light, and the children of this world; and that is a distinction which ought to be frequently adverted to, in our addresses to every mixed or general congregation. There are those of you, it is to be hoped, who have been born of the Spirit, and so made practically alive to the reality and the emphatic import of eternal things: And, there are those of you, it is to be feared, who have not been disturbed, or at least not yet awakened out of the deep slumbers of carnality; and to whom, till they are so awakened, the shortness of human life will prove an argument, in every way as feeble and as fruitless, as any that can be drawn out of the magazines either of natural or revealed truth. Let us first, therefore, endeavour to urge on the former of these two classes, such Christian lessons as the text might lead us at present to administer; and then let us endeavour to urge their conversion to Christianity, on the latter of these two classes, and that still too from the consideration of our text, which, though without the Spirit of God, it will fall powerlessly on their consciences, may, by the Spirit of God, which both they and we are bound to pray for, be the very instrument of awakening them.

I. The first esson that we would urge from the shortness of our abode upon earth, is moderation in regard to all its enjoyments—moderation, whether of desire in the pursuit, or of delight in the possession of them. There is not a stronger indication of time being felt as substantially our all, and of eternity being but a shadowy dream in our imagination, than the full set of our hearts upon the advancement of our condition in this world—so as to bedim all our prospects, and reduce to utter powerlessness all our efforts towards the advancement of our condition in the next world. The plausibility wherewith this undoubted habit of the soul is often palliated, is the duty that lies upon us all, of building up a provision for our family. But then they too are a family of immortals. They too are travelling along a journey that is short, and towards a long and lasting habitation. And if the accumulation of wealth for the expenses of their road, shuts out all care for the accumulation of that treasure, the purpose of which is to enrich and to beautify their residence for ever—still it resolves itself into that delusion, whereby the things of sense have been made to elbow the things of faith out of the system of human affairs.—Every man loves himself; and the preference of time to eternity for himself, gives decisive token of an unbelief about eternity. And most men love their children; and the preference of their time to their eternity, is just in every way as decisive of the same unbelief. The utter relaxation of all Christian guardianship through the week, is but wretchedly redeemed, by the tasks and the formalities of a Sabbath evening; and, on the other hand, the busy and intent and ever-plying carefulness wherewith men will labour for the earthly good of their children, forms the most impressive rebuke that can be given, of the little they do and the listlessness they feel for their unperishable souls. And O did they but compute, both for themselves and for their little ones—how soon the high-blown enterprise, with all its train of sanguine hopes, and dazzling anticipa-

tions, and rapidly succeeding centages, and the brilliant perspective, perhaps of a family raised to unbounded affluence, and admitted to all the privileges of free and honourable conpanionship among the upper circles of society—did they compute, as they would the returns of any worldly adventure, how very soon time with its ceaseless footstep will outstride the whole speculation, and cast both them and their children's children behind it among the ages that are forgotten—did they but think of the speed and the certainty of that coming day, when their bodies shall be food for the creeping things of the earth; and their souls, if neglected now, shall then be wandering in unprovided nakedness, through the dark realms of condemnation—did they but figure, as well they might, the look of despair, and the language of fell but fruitless execration, which ungodly families will then cast at the parents by whom their eternity has been undone—did they contemplate with adequate feeling, the anguish, and the helplessness, and the hatred, and the scowling reproach, that should then sit on the countenances of those, for whom now they toil so strenuously, and in the splendour of whose coming opulence they rejoice—O how would the deep and the dismal cloud that sits on their ulterior prospect, overshadow the nearer one. And even while they rode in triumph on the wings of this world's prosperity, would they learn to mix trembling with their mirth, and to carry the burden of all their aggrandizement with most reverential and religious soberness.

But on the other hand, and secondly, a dangerous adversity, as well as a dangerous success, may be the portion of many a family; and a boding cloud of disaster may hang and may discharge itself over their earthly habitation; and as they look onward to the scene of their future history in the world, may they feel themselves standing on the margin of a dark and fearful unknown; and even though daily bread is made sure by the promises of God to all who trust in them—yet who can brook the humiliation of a descent so woful; and what is the charm that can tranquillize the heart into patience, when the shame, and the disappointment, and the terrors of the impending poverty, have thus raised within it the conflict of many agitations. It is thus, that man manifests himself to be as much the creature of sense in the day of his misfortune, as in the day of his prosperity. It proves how fully his affections are set upon the world, when, on gaining it, he rejoices as if he had gained all; but it just proves his affections to be as fully and as exclusively set upon the world, when, on losing it, he abandons himself as utterly to despair as if he had lost all. With a spiritual man, to whose mind spiritual things come home, with the impression of their reality—the consideration of our text would be effectual in both these cases; and while by its first lesson it would reduce the extravagance of his joy, it would by a second lesson equally reduce the extravagance of his distress. It has been well said that the faith of immortality, gives a certain firmness of texture to the soul. It places it on a high and a peaceful summit, which is beyond the reach of all earthly fluctuations. It brings within the ken of the mortal eye, such mighty spaces of bliss and glory interminable, as serve to expunge from the view of the beholder, that short intervening distance by which he is conducted to the margin of this vast territory. It is indeed a high exhibition which the disciple makes of his Christianity, when, sure of the present day because he knows that its subsistence is guaranteed, and sure of the coming immortality because he has laid his full reliance on the promises of the gospel—he can fearlessly commit the whole of that pilgrimage which lies between these two extremes, to a faithfulness that he knows to be unfailing—when, from the shore of present certainty, he can eye without dismay the brief but the stormy passage that lies on this side of death—when, athwart the dreary wilderness, he can behold the day-star of immortality, and be cheered by the beams of light and love and purity that irradiate therefrom; and, knowing that though the discipline for heaven be severe yet the time of that discipline is short, he can put up with all the pain and all the poverty which are allotted to his life in this world, and possess his soul in hope and in patience.

And there are other and severer ills

than those of poverty, wherewith the spirit of a pilgrim may be sorely exercised. There may be the death of friends; and, what perhaps is still more insupportable, there may be their desertion and their treachery. It is in the power of the arch-enemy of our race, to instil of his own spirit into the hearts of men—thus making it possible, even in the fair intercourse of society, to meet with deep and unfeeling cruelty under the guise of kindness; and, in return for the unsuspecting confidence wherewith one pours out the sincerity of his friendship into another's ear, to bring upon himself the unkindness and the wiles and the bitter derision of a cool and crafty deceiver. The great balsam for the wounded heart, under an infliction so painful, is the hope of immortality—in the believing sight of that distant heaven, where cunning and contrivance and brooding secrecy are unknown—where the light of a pure and cloudless transparency, sits upon every character—and not one countenance that there opens upon you with benignity, which does not truly express the glow and the graciousness that are to be found in the innermost recesses of the soul. This cheering hope is the grand medicine of the heart, under the bitterness it may be doomed to experience; but it does add a mellowing influence to the operation, when one thinks of the conflict of all its emotions that it will be soon over—that the triumphs of an infernal policy have but their little and their short-lived day, which will speedily be ended—that a retreat of peacefulness is at hand, in the bosom of which the oppressor and his victim will lie down in their graves together, where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary are at rest.

But this conducts us to the third Christian lesson, to which the consideration of our text might lend a very powerful reinforcement; and that is a lesson of charity, even in the midst of deepest injuries and bitterest provocations. A great deal more than one half of the malignity and exasperation of this world, is due to the want of mutual understanding. We often murmur, the one against the other, just because we misconceive one another. And the proud and stubborn attitude of the two adversaries, and the sullen distance at which they so immovably stand, and the deep and ireful animosities which rankle within them, and the frenzied imaginations they have of their mutual deceit and mutual worthlessness, with all the other symptoms of fierce and stout hostility, are often resolvable—not unto the defect of truth or of friendship, but purely into a defect of explanation. Now this ought to have a softening influence. But when even for this, the evidences whether of malice or dishonesty, are too glaring to be resisted, there is something to temper and to mollify all our sensations of wrathfulness, in the thought of the coming disease and the coming deathbed. It were indeed a triumph, could the kindling resentments that now rage and burn within you, be quenched by the waters of compassion; and for this purpose, think we beseech you, even of the greatest enemy you may have in this world—how soon the fatal distemper will seize upon him; and the whole frame of his mortality will shake into dissolution; and he will lie a stricken and irrecoverable patient in most affecting helplessness; and he will send out a voice of feebleness that may implore, but has not strength to upbraid you; and after his lips have quivered and his eyes have rolled at the coming on of the last agony, he will sink away into deep and unbroken stillness. And O if you but saw the pale and peaceful repose, that sits on the dead man's countenance; or, still more, if you could follow his unembodied spirit to that bar, where it stands naked and defenceless before the scrutiny of God; and behold how it trembles there under the piercing inspection of an eye, before which all deceit lies open and all decision must for ever melt away—tell us if this were present to your contemplation as it ought whether it would not curb the restless indignancy of your spirit, and whether you would not forget all his injustice and all his cruelties in time, when you thought of the horrors of his undone eternity?

But let us rise from particular lessons to one that is comprehensive of them all—from the separate graces which enter into the sanctification of a disciple, to the work of sanctification at large—from the

special virtues, that enter as so many distinct features of worth and loveliness in the Christian character, to the habit of general and most intent diligence in perfecting that character in all its points; and thus standing complete in the whole will of God. There is a mighty work to be done; and few and evil are the days that are allotted for the doing of it. The race of Christianity is a race against time—in which therefore there is not one minute to spare from its earnestness and toilsome prosecution. We know that it is the righteousness of Christ, which hath purchased for us our title of entry into Heaven. But there is a righteousness which must adhere personally to ourselves, that we may be qualified for heaven's exercises and heaven's joys. He hath recovered for us our inheritance, and our birth-right; and we must now enter upon our course of education, that we may become meet for the inheritance, and be qualified for doing honour to our birth-right, by the acquirement of all those graces and proprieties, which become the possession of it. It may be by an act of undeserved patronage, that a place of favour and emolument in the service of your earthly monarch is conferred upon you. But yet, after all, there must be a training for the place, and an examination of your personal fitness for its duties, ere you are inducted into it. A mansion of glory in the upper paradise, is just such a place of favour and distinction, under the eye of your Monarch which is in heaven—given freely through Christ Jesus to all who will; but still a place for which you must be trained, and on the success of which training you have to undergo a trial and an examination, and must have an approving sentence proclaimed, ere the door of heaven shall be opened to you.

On that day we shall be taken account of, not according to our dogmata but according to our doings; and we shall not be admitted to any part of the salvation that is through the blood of Christ, unless it be found that we have a part in the salvation that is by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And to work out this salvation, there must on our part be a fear, and a trembling; and an earnest supplication for that grace of God, which can alone work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and an ever-plying diligence in the cultivation of our personal character, that we may be found without spot and blemish in the day of Jesus Christ; and such a contest with nature, as that the spirit of the gospel may prevail over it, and sin, though not so eradicated, as that we shall be free of its hateful presence, may be so subdued as that we shall be free of its hateful tyranny. And is this a work, we would ask, that is only to be taken up at random opportunities; and abandoned to such scraps of leisure and convenience, as the busy history of a life spent in worldliness can afford; and put off indefinitely to those rare and occasional spaces, which may or may not cast up, when a respite from the manifold urgencies of the world meets and is at one with the caprice of our own inclinations. This may do with those who can recline themselves in the arms of their fancied orthodoxy, or it may do with those who think that the sobrieties of civil life are prepara ion enough for the sacredness of heaven. But it will not do with those, who, aware, of the mighty transformation that is called for into another heart and another character than before, labour to realize upon their persons that very Christianity which shone forth in the days of the New Testament—when the all things whatsoever of human life, were consecrated to the glory of Him who is the Author of it; and the lamp of religion was fed by the incense of a perpetual offering; and prayer without ceasing, and watchfulness with all perseverance, spoke the habitual attitude of men whose lives were ever girded for the work and girded for the warfare—who, in every change of experience, could find a something to do, that marked the discipleship on which they had entered; and, on the constant outlook of defence against the disturbing forces of the world, could keep an unstained purity in the midst of its most deceitful blandishments, and a fervent unabated charity of spirit when assailed by its host of most galling provocations.

There is indeed a mighty work to be done ere we die—that of crucifying the old man, and making a new man all over again—that of resisting the desires and

the habits of nature, till they are at least vanquished, if not exterminated—that of transmuting the character of earth which we have at the first, into the character of heaven which we must acquire afterwards, else heaven we shall never reach. The distance, great as it is between the two states, must be traversed on this side of death, or we shall never attain a state of blessedness on the other side of death. It is a far journey; and short is the period that we have for the performance of it. With many of us the day is far spent; and the shades of night are gathering around us; and we still linger, and hesitate, and send forth our few feeble and ineffectual aspirations, at the mere outset of this vast enterprise. The thing to be accomplished is, that we shall be translated from the mastery of sin to the mastery of grace; or that the works of the flesh shall be abandoned, and the fruits of the spirit shall flourish upon our persons abundantly. Ere these mortal bodies go into dissolution, the life of Christ must be made manifest in them—"else when they are raised again, and sisted before His judgment seat, they will be found unfit of occupancy in any of His everlasting habitations. The distance between hell and heaven is not greater, than is the distance between sin and sacredness; and what we have distinctly to do while we are in the world, is to make good our departure from the one territory and our entrance upon the other; and, clearing our way from the entanglements which detain us on the outcast and accursed region, to break forth on a career of prosperous and progressive holiness.

Now one entanglement may detain us as effectually as a thousand; and the finer subtleties of the world as powerfully enslave and implicate the heart, as do its most gross and revolting criminalities. Ye men, who sit at ease as if your work was over, or as if only a little of it was yet left which may be done at any time—we do not charge you with such sins, as go to deform your visible history. But we bid you remember that ungodliness is a sin—that causeless anger is a sin—that brooding anxiety is a sin—that dependence on the creature is a sin—that langour in religion is a sin—that distaste for prayer is a sin. We bid you think that countless are the sins which go to desecrate the spirit, while they leave the aspect of the exterior morality entire; and the busy discipline to which you are called, is to war against and to subjugate them all. It lies with the single strength of any one of them, to keep you moored on forbidden ground; and we therefore ask, whether, escaped from them all, you are now bending in full sail to that land of uprightness, where nought that is unholy can enter? You perhaps would like it better, could you let down the guardianship of your spirits, and sink into the arms of an inert and unfruitful orthodoxy. But know that the grace of the gospel is held forth, not that you may indulge but that you may deny ungodliness. This it teaches, and this it enables us; and the full proof that you have to give of your discipleship is, that you are earnestly aspiring after the whole perfection of heaven, and, through the implored agency of the Spirit on your hearts, that you are daily coming nearer to it.

It is by the perseverance of your conduct in the walk of the Spirit, that the life of the Spirit in your souls is upholden. The Holy Ghost is given to those who obey Him. Every act of charity, nourishes the principle of charity. Every act of forbearance, strengthens you the more against the assault of future provocations. Every commitment of your anxieties to God, trains you more to the habit of thus disposing the heavier anxieties that still may offer to oppress and to overwhelm you. The doings of the Christian life go to enfeeble all the corruption that is resisted, and to confirm all the graces which have been put into operation. By reason of use, there is a prompter discernment, and a readier preference of all that is good—a quicker recoil, and more resolute departure from all that is evil. It is thus that every honest disciple, toils his laborious way through the course of sanctification. He spares neither prayers nor pains, in this steep ascent up the hill of difficulty. He makes fast work of it; for that time is precious which is dealt out in small and precarious measurement, and when nevertheless a work on which eternity hangs remains to be accomplished. And thus it is, that he makes a business of

the concerns of his soul—watching, and working, and connecting all his movements below with the eye of Him that looketh from above—denying himself at every time of temptation, and crowding every day of his brief endurance in the world with the deeds of new obedience.

We know not a text of more urgent and alarming import in the whole Bible, than that the righteous scarcely shall be saved. They will make out the prize of eternal life; but like the victorious courser in the race, they will make it as by the distance of a hair-breadth. Compare the task to be done, with the time that there is for the doing of it; and how it should speed us on to the business of our eternity; and what an occupying of all our hours, and a plying of all our expedients ought there to be—lest when the night cometh in which no man can work, we shall be found short of the kingdom of God.

II. But this carries us to the second head of discourse. If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? We are called to kiss the Son, while he is in the way. It is a short and a little while. The season of offered mercy is speeding onward to its close. In a few years, the likeliest of us all will be swept away from the land of gospel calls and gospel opportunities. The voice of a beseeching God is upon us only until death—after which the voice ceases to be heard; and the light of the Sun of righteousness is lifted up no longer; and the fountain that is opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, has an everlasting seal set upon it; and a dark and impassable gulph of separation, opens asunder, between the souls of the impenitent and the blood of sprinkling. Kiss the Son then while He is in the way; or, mark the alternative, His wrath will begin to burn. He who now is all meekness and gentleness and kind entreaty, will then look upon you with an altered countenance; and it is indeed a striking expression—the wrath of the Lamb—the wrath of Him who is denoted by that which is the emblem of patience and non-resistance and timidity—a wrath then, to the excitement of which, there must have been a series of deep and bitter provocations—a wrath, ye careless and ye worldly, that you are now treasuring up unto the day of its outpouring—when you shall cry in vain for the rocks and the mountains to cover you; and will be made to feel that no indignation burns more fiercely than the indignation of slighted tenderness, and no vengeance more overwhelming than the vengeance of offered and rejected mercy.

Nor should we marvel at such a catastrophe—for only think of the way in which it is brought on. That Christ should so have toiled and suffered for our sakes—that He should have descended on our miserable world, from that eminence of pure and peaceful glory which He had before occupied—that He should have put on the infirmities of our nature, and shrouded His Godhead in a tabernacle of flesh, which He took back with Him to Heaven, and which, for aught we know, will adhere to Him there throughout all eternity—that, amid the agonies of a mysterious conflict, He should have poured out His soul; and, undertaking for the guilty millions of our race, should have borne the whole weight of their chastisement—that, during the hour and the power of darkness, He, in the depths of a passion that well nigh overwhelmed Him, should in love to men have weathered such an endurance; when the sword of righteous vengeance was awakened against Him; and the cup of retribution was put into His hands, and drunk by Him to its very dregs; and the vials of an incensed and insulted Lawgiver should have been poured forth by the Father upon the Son, when He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice—that thus He should have travailed; and thus He should have put forth all the energies both of strength and of suffering, that the mountain of our iniquity may be levelled, and we may pass over in peace and safety unto God—that, after having made reconciliation, He should rise again to the place from whence He came, and be hailed by the shoutings of the celestial as the author and the finisher of a mighty enterprise—that, after having entered there, He should turn His face to that world in whose behalf this movement was made; and mark how the men of it were prizing the vast redemption, and crowding the now

open gate of transition which leads from sin unto the Saviour—Just think of this, and call you it no provocation, that, after the cost and the labour of rearing such an apparatus, the overtures thereof should fall in listlessness and without efficacy on the hearts of our alienated species—that this great work of deliverance should be vilified into a thing of nought, and by the very creatures for whose deliverance and whose welfare it was accomplished—that we should slight these tidings of the gospel as insignificant, or impatiently spurn them as an offence away from us. O, think of all this, and you will be at no loss to comprehend, why He, who now stands out in the winning gentleness of His nature, and bends with longing compassion over you, should then come forth in vindictiveness and fury, on all who have put to mockery the dear-bought privilege; and on all who have unthankfully scorned the grace and the mercy of so precious an invitation.

This day of wrath is at hand. To you at least the time is short, when its fire will burn around you, and, through the openings of your mortal framework, as it goeth into dissolution, will it enter the premises, and seize the affrighted soul that now occupies therein. While in the body the surrounding materialism serves as a screen between us and the Deity; and we can escape into a temporary oblivion of Him and of His anger, among the scenes and the pursuits and the enjoyments of this visible world. But there is no such screen between God and the disembodied spirit—nothing that can shield it from the sight of His rebuking countenance, and the immediate glance of His fiery indignation. We are bidden now, to speed our way from this impending storm; and by movements too which are all expressive of rapidity—to flee from the coming wrath—to flee for refuge unto Christ—to haste and make no delay that we should keep the commandments. All which precepts, betoken the urgency of a matter on hand. And with reason too, for, if it do not become better, your condition is daily becoming worse—your conscience more seared against the denunciations of the law—your heart more proof against the terrors of the threatened vengeance—your whole person more warped among the entanglements of sin, and more helplessly captive than before to the great adversary. This day may aggravate your danger. This call that is now sounded, ye impenitent, in your hearing—if it kindle no purpose of amendment in your bosoms, may kindle a fiercer wrath in the bosom of the Divinity. Even now, may you be adding to the store of displeasure that is kept in reserve for the great day of its manifestation. And close as you are to the brink of eternity, and short as the period is, that will conduct you to its verge and plunge you into its abyss for ever—we ask, is it for you thus to accumulate the wrath of God, and to cradle your souls into a delusive peace, on the very eve of its discharge upon you?

Despise not the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; but know that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance. And do not, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

O avail yourselves, then, of the precious moment that is now passing over you. Christ is offered to you. Salvation is at your choice. Forgiveness, through the blood of a satisfying atonement, is yours if you will. God does not want to magnify the power of His anger—He wants to magnify the power of His grace upon you. Try to approach Him in your own righteousness; and you will find yourselves toiling at an impracticable distance away from Him. But come with the righteousness of Christ as your plea; and you will indeed be permitted to draw nigh. God will rejoice over you for the sake of Him in whom He is well pleased; and you may freely, and with all your heart, rejoice in God, through Him, by whom ye have received the atonement. Could we state the thing more plainly, we would. We want to bring you into the condition of a simple receiver of God's pardon—a simple holder on the truth of His promises. It is on this footing, and on this alone, that you will ever be clothed in the garments of acceptance; or stand firmly and surely on the ground of reconciliation before Him. O turn then into this peaceful haven; and, in

the act of so turning, God will pour out His spirit upon you. As the fruit of your faith, you will become a new creature; and in stepping over to that region of sunshine where all is gladness, you will be sure to experience also that all is grace—that the peace and purity of the gospel are ever in alliance—They who walk before God without fear, being they who walk before Him in righteousness and in holiness all the days of their life.

SERMON XXVI.

The Faith of the Patriarchs.

"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."—HEBREWS xi. 14.

IT is in the power of actions as well as f words to declare plainly; and the patriarchs of this chapter made it as plain by what they did as by what they said, whether it was that their desires and their affections were tending. Nothing could be more explicit of this, than the practice of Abraham—who gave up the place of his nativity; and tore himself away from all its charms and endearments; and became a pilgrim in an unknown land: And in the hope of a very distant fulfilment, which he saw to be yet afar off, and lying greatly beyond the period of his life in the world, did he shape every movement of that life, at the bidding of Him who had uttered a promise, and in whose hand alone lay the accomplishment of it. What is very well termed a man's general drift, stood most palpably out on the whole of his history. And in the same way, every human being has a prevailing drift, that may, in most instances, be pretty accurately gathered from certain obvious and characteristic indications, which are ever obtruding themselves on the notice of by-standers.

But there is a distinction to be remarked here. It may sometimes not be so very plain, what the particular interest is, which a man is prosecuting with the main force and intentness of his ambitious desires—whether it be the love of money, or the love of power, or the love of acceptance and good will in society, or the love of eminence above his fellows by the lustre of a higher literary reputation. It may sometimes require a force of discernment to ascertain what the leading object of pursuit is—while, without any stretch of penetration at all, it may glare upon us with the whole broadness of day, where it is that the object thus aspired after is locally situated. I may not be able to pronounce of the most bustling and ambitious member of our city corporation, whether his heart is most set on the acquirement of a princely fortune, or on a supreme ascendancy over all his compeers in the political management of this great community. But whether it be the one or the other, I can say on the instant, that the great theatre of his fond and favourite exertion is this, the place of our habitation—that it is here, and not in the neighbouring metropolis where his various interests lie—that the game in which he is engaged is the business of this city, or the polities of this city, and not the business or the polities of any other—that it is among home society around him, where he seeks to signalize himself, whether by wealth or by influence, or by popularity; and not in any remote or distant society with whom no sympathies are felt, and for whose homage either to his dignity, or to his opulence no anxiety whatever has been conceived. All this may be plain enough without any piercing anatomy at all into the mysteries of the human character—so that, however difficult it may be to ascertain the precise interest which most engrosses the aim of any given individual, there may be nothing difficult in the question of the precise

locality, where all his interests and all the choice objects of his taste and of his affections are to be found.

And thus, in like manner, while skill, and subtlety, and great power and ingenuity of moral perception may be necessary, to estimate what that thing in the world is, which any of its people is most in quest of—yet it may be resistlessly evident to every eye, that they are the things and interests of this world, and not of any other, on which all its people are lavishing their time and their thoughts and the earnestness of their best and most devoted regards. We may not be able so to dissect the moral constitution of an acquaintance, as to find out of him, what that precise earthly object is, which wields the most tyrannical ascendancy over his affections—and, yet be very sure, all the while, that the object is an earthly and not a heavenly one—that it is ease, or fortune, or fame, or sensible indulgence (though you do not know which of them), on this side of time; and neither any enjoyment nor any glory on the other side of it—that it is perhaps the advancement of a rising family, stopping short however within the confines of the present life, without one thought of advancing either themselves or their children to a station of immortality. One would need to be profoundly intimate with the hidden mysteries of our nature, to trace the numerous shadings, and varieties of worldliness that obtain in our species. But it may be a matter of the most obvious recognition to the most simple of men, that worldliness in some shape or other, is the great pervading element of all its generations. This much at least may be seen, without the piercing eye either of scholar or satirist; and while the apostle said of the faithful whom he was enumerating, how they declared plainly that they were seeking a future and a distant country—we may say of nearly all whom we know, and of all whom we look upon in society, that they declare as plainly the world to be the only scene on which their hopes and their wishes do expatiate, and an atmosphere of unmingled worldliness to be the only element they breathe in.

It is not either that man is actually satisfied with present things. It is not that he has set him down in placid acquiescence, among the creatures and the circumstances by which he is for the moment surrounded. We see nothing of the repose of full and finished attainment, with any of our acquaintances. There is none of them, in fact, who is not plainly stretching himself forward to some one distant object or other; and, as the tokens of one who is evidently on a pursuit, do we behold him in a state of motion and activity and busy endeavour. But when we come to inquire into the nature of the object that so stimulates his desires and his faculties, do we find it to be a something which lies within the confines of mortality—a something suited only to such senses and such powers of enjoyment, as death will extinguish—a something that he may perhaps hand down to posterity, but which a few rapid years will wrest away from himself, and that by an act of everlasting bereavement. We cannot move amongst our fellows, whether in meetings, or in market-places, or even on those convivial occasions when man is so willing to drown all his graver anxieties in the playfulness of a passing hour, without most plainly perceiving that the present is not enough for him—that he is constantly going forth in anticipation on some distant future, which he has not realized—that, instead of the quiescence of one who has found, there is with him all the forecast and restlessness and outlook of one who is still agog and is seeking. There is not an individual we know, who is not bending thus onwards, and that, with the set and strenuousness of his whole heart, on some object which lies or appears to lie in the perspective before him. But when we come to inquire, how far on in the line of his history it may be placed, we find, in the overwhelming majority of instances, that it belongs to the region of sense, and almost never to the region of spirituality—that the main force of human ambition is lavished on some swift and splendid evanescence, which cannot last to any single possessor beyond the limits of his own puny generation—that all are seeking, no doubt; but where is the discoverable symptom, of almost any seeking beyond the confines of that territory, which God hath spread under our feet, first for

the sustenance, and then for the sepulture of human bodies? Where is almost the man who is prosecuting, with the assiduity of a business, his personal interest in that country where dwell the spirits of the just made perfect? This tendency towards the distant unseen stood out most plainly and most declaredly on the history of the believing patriarchs. But now the tendency of almost every man we see, is plainly the opposite of this—so that on travelling the round of human experience, it may nearly be affirmed without alleviation of all, that, amid the heat and the hurry and the hard-driving of creatures in full pursuit of a something that lies in the distance before them, it is uniformly a something which they can only hold in frail and fleeting tenantry while they abide in this world; and which death, remorseless and unescapable death, will soon ravish eternally from their grasp.

To behold in man such a proneness to futurity, and at the same time such a perverseness in all his computations of futurity—to see him so disdainful of the past, and so dissatisfied with the present, and yet, in labouring for the future, to fix his regards on that only futurity which must soon be present, and soon be irrevocably past—to see him so boundless in his desires, and yet so averse to that alone field of enterprise where he can have scope for them, and so unwilling to exchange the objects of time for those of a boundless eternity—to perceive him so obstinately and so peremptorily blind in this matter, and that not merely in the face of most obvious arithmetic, but in the face of most urgent and affecting mementoes with which the sad history of every year is strewing his path in this world of mortality—Surely, it is one of the strangest mysteries of our nature, and at the same time, one of the strongest tokens of its derangement, that man should thus embark all his desires in a frail and crazy vessel, so soon to be engulphed by that sweeping whirlwind which sooner or later will overtake the whole of our existing generation—or that, on the quicksands of time, he should rear his only resting place, and even please himself with the delusion of its firm and secure establishment—though he knows, and most assuredly knows, that a few little years will witness its total and irremediable overthrow.

But to alleviate this gross infatuation, it may be said, and with plausibility too, that the region of sense and the region of spirituality are so unlike the one to the other—that there is positively nothing in our experience of the former, which can at all familiarize our minds to the anticipation of the latter. And then, as if to intercept the flight of our imaginations forward to eternity, there is such a dark and cloudy envelopment that hangs on the very entrance of it. Ere we can realize that distant world of souls, we must pierce our way beyond the curtain of the grave—we must scale this awful barricado which separates the visible from the invisible—we must make our escape from all the close and warm and besetting urgencies, which, in this land of human bodies, are ever plying us with constant and powerful solicitation; and force our spirits across the boundaries of sense, to that mysterious place, where cold and meagre and evanescent spectres dwell together in some unknown and incomprehensible mode of existence. We know not, if there be another tribe of beings in the universe who have such a task to perform. Angels have no death to undergo. There is no such affair of unnatural violence between them and their final destiny. It is for man, and for aught that appears, it is for man alone, to fetch from the other side of a material panorama that hems and incloses him, the great and abiding realities with which he has everlastingly to do. It is for him, so locked in an imprisonment of day, and with no other loop-holes of communication between himself and all that is around him than the eye and the ear—it is for him to light up in his bosom a lively and realizing sense of the things which eye hath never seen, and ear hath never heard. It is for man, and perhaps for man alone, to travel in thought over the ruins of a mighty dissolution; and, beyond the wreck of that present world by which he is encompassed, to conceive that future world in which he is to expatiate for ever.

But, harder achievement perhaps than any, it is for man, in the exercise of faith, to brave that most appalling of all contemplations, the decay and dissolution of

himself; to think of the time when his now animated framework, every part of which is so sensitive and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when the vital warmth, by which at present it is so thoroughly pervaded, shall take its departure, and leave to coldness and to abandonment, all that is visible of this moving and active and thinking creature—when those limbs with which he now steps so firmly, and that countenance out of which he now looks so gracefully, and that tongue with which he now speaks so eloquently, and that whole body for the interest and provision of which he now labours as strenuously as if indeed it were immortal—when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefaction, and at length crumble with the coffin which incloses them into dust. Why, to a being in the full consciousness and possession of his living energies, there is something, if we may be allowed the expression, so foreign and so unnatural in death, that we are not to wonder if it scare away the mind from that ulterior region of existence to which it is the stepping-stone. Angels have no such transition of horror and mystery to undergo. There is no screen of darkness like this, interposed between them and any portion of their futurity, however distant; and it appears only of man, that it is for him to drive a breach across that barrier which looks so impenetrable, or so to surmount the power of vision as to carry his aspirings over the summit of all that vision has made known to him.

Now if this be the work of faith, you will perceive that it is not just so light and easy an achievement as some would apprehend. Why, there are some who seem to feel as if nothing more were required for the completion of this work, than merely to adjust the orthodoxy of their creed, and then have done with it. To acquire faith is with them as simple an affair, as to learn their catechism. Let them only import a sound metaphysic notion into the head; and this, they think, will bear them upward into heaven, though their treasure is not there and their heart is not there. To seize upon the title-deed to heaven, they feel as if they had nothing more to do, than to seize upon some certain dogma in the science of Theology: and that by keeping firm hold of this, they hold a kind of legal or stipulated security for a place in the inheritance above. Faith is with them a mere embrace, by the understanding, of one or more articles in an approved system of Divinity. It is enough, in their imagination, to have a right to glory—that they be intellectually right about the matter of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. Heaven is somehow looked upon as a reward to the believer for the soundness of his speculative opinions. The faith which is unto salvation, is regarded in no other light than as the bare recognition of certain doctrinal truths, and the salvation itself as a return for such a recognition. The indolence of a mere theoretical contemplation, is thus substituted for the practice and the pains-taking and the perseverance of men, in busy pursuit of some object to which they are bending forward, with the desire and the diligence of an earnest prosecution. Instead of the attitude of men who are seeking, you witness the repose and the complacency of men who have already found. They look as if they had gotten all they want—a sort of mystical assurance for the next world, but without one expression beaming forth from the history of their lives, that they felt themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the present world. There is positively nothing about them, which declares plainly, as with the patriarchs of old, that they are seeking a country. With the understanding, they occasionally meditate on heavenly things; but with the affections they uniformly and habitually mind earthly things. We see nothing to distinguish them from others in the style of their great practical movements in the world; nor can we characterize their faith in any other terms, than as a mere entertainment given by the mind to the topics of an inert and unproductive theory.

Now this is really not the apostolical description of faith. It is not that which heads the enumeration of those Old Testament worthies, who exemplified the power and the operation of this principle. The assent of the understanding to any one of the positions of orthodoxy, is neither the substance of things hoped for, nor is it the evidence of things not seen; or rather, as it should have been translated, it is not the confident expectation of things hoped for, neither is it the clea

and assured conviction of things which are not seen. This last is the principle which set all the patriarchs in motion. They saw future things, with as fresh and operative a feeling of their reality, as they saw present things; and they acted not merely on the matters that were near and around them, but also on the matters that were in the distance before them: and believing equally in both, they just measured their path and their proceedings in the world, according to the real importance of both. This is faith; and you see how immediately, and without the intervention of a single step, practice emerges out of it—and how, by its simple presence in the mind, futurity obtains the ascendancy over all the purposes of the mind—and how, just as naturally as a man will prepare his house for the visit of a friend, because he knows his friend is coming, will a man prepare himself for the visit of his Saviour, because he believes and knows that his Saviour is coming. And hence the reason why the apostle minded not earthly things, but had his conversation in heaven, was, because from that place he looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—All illustrative of this, that, by faith, a moving and prevailing force upon the conduct is made to lie in the consideration of that which is coming, as well as in the urgency of that which is at hand; that the way in which the reality of a man's faith is attested, is by present but lesser interests being made to give way to future and greater ones; and that it is only he who declares plainly by his doings, that he is in quest of these future interests, it is he and he only who also declares that he is in the faith.

Think for one moment of the apostolical definition of faith. It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen—or, as it should have been rendered, it is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the clear and assured conviction of things not seen. It is that which gives to an interest that is future, all the urgency and deciding power upon the conduct, which belong to an interest that is present: And should the future interest be greater than the present, and they come into competition, the one with the other, faith is that which resolves him who is under its influence, to give up the immediate gratification for the sake of the distant advantage. Thus it is, essentially and by its very nature, a practical principle: and no sooner does it take possession of the heart of any individual, than it holds out the plain attestation of itself upon his history—and not by his dogmata, but by his doings.

But in the work of seeking, it is possible to go astray. Paul gives an instance of this when he records it of his own countrymen, that they sought but stumbled, because they sought to establish a righteousness of their own. They sought to win Heaven by purchase, instead of humbling themselves to the acceptance of it as a present. But to make out this, man must either equalize his doings to the demands of the law; or the shortness of the doings from the demands must just be overlooked, and a polluted obedience be sustained by God as an adequate price for the rewards of eternity. The former way of it is impossible. Man has already fallen short; and lost a distance, which he, with all his strenuousness, cannot recover; and incurred a guilt, which he, with all his payments and all his penances, cannot atone for. The latter way of it is equally impossible. If it be true that man cannot clear himself of guilt, it is just as true that God cannot connive at it. It were carrying heaven by storm, and forcing a way into it over the ruins of the divine government—were the creature, on the strength of his own deservings, to challenge a place in it, while one single commandment that had fallen from the mouth of the Creator was either undone or resisted. And when that creature is man, so far gone in disobedience—such an attempt is marked both by a haughty presumption in himself, and by a most debasing sense of what was due to the holiness and authority of God. Man's obedience is not worthy of heaven, as a reward from God—however worthy heaven may be of God's munificence, as His free and unmerited donation to man. The gospel never relaxes into any compromise with human unworthiness—when it affirms the footing upon which eternal life is held forth to our species. It is not earned by us in the shape of wages. It is offered to us in the shape of a grant; and, whatever be the way in which we are to seek after a place in the kingdom of God, it is not by labouring

to render an equivalent price either in our property or in our services, that we shall obtain the possession of it.

Heaven is held out in the gospel, not in bargain as a reward to our performance of God's precepts, but simply in anticipation as a fulfilment to our hope of God's promises; and what place it may be asked is there for seeking after this? How shall we seek that which is already gotten? or what conceivable thing is there to do, in quest of a benefit that is offered to our hand; and on the honesty of which offer we have merely to lay an unfaltering reliance? We can understand how to go about it, when the matter is to seek that which we must work for. But if heaven be not of works but of grace, what remains but to delight ourselves in the secure anticipation of that, which we should count upon as a certainty, instead of labouring for it as if it were a contingency that hung upon our labours?

And yet they are promises, and nothing else, which put all the patriarchs into motion. It was just because they saw these promises afar off, and were persuaded to them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth—it was just because of all this, that they declared plainly, both by their desires and by their doings, that they sought a country. Had the land of Canaan been proposed to Abraham as a thing to be purchased for a price adequate to its value, he would never have moved a single footstep towards the acquisition of it. But when proposed to him on the simple footing of a promise, and to obtain a right to the land he had nothing to do but to accept of it—from that moment he set himself busily forward, in prosecution of all the required steps by which he and his posterity were, not to buy a thing that was for sale, but to enter on the possession of a thing that was given. And it is quite the same of the heavenly Canaan. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord—a thing not purchased by us, but purchased for us by another—a matter so gigantically beyond any price that man could render for it, that, if held up to him in this aspect, it would look and rightly look to his despairing eye as if placed in the region of impossibility away from him—a height of privilege and of glory, not to be scaled by human virtue at its utmost strenuousness; and therefore brought down to human attainment, by the opening of a mediatorial gate, through which one and all of us are invited to enter upon the joys of immortality. But, instead of bidding him enter upon these joys, bid him earn them, and that by the produce of his own industry; and then, as surely as a task felt to be insurmountable instead of stirring up his powers weighs them down to inactivity—so surely will heaven, held out not as a loving offer but as a legal payment, fasten such a drag upon his exertions as is quite immoveable. Grace has been charged with ministering to human indolence. But it is free grace, and nothing else, which unfastens this drag—which releases man from the imprisonment that formerly held him—which brings him out to a large and open space, and sets an object of hopefulness before him that he knows to be accessible—which breaks him loose from the grasp of that law from whose condemnation and whose penalties he felt so inextricable. So that instead of doing nothing for heaven, when the gulph of a pathless separation stood in the way of it, he can now embark on a career of approximation, where, by all his doings, and by all his seekings he may declare plainly that heaven is indeed the country to which he is travelling.

It is said of the patriarchs in this chapter, that they were not only persuaded of the promises, but that they embraced them. To be persuaded of them, was to believe in the truth of the promises; to embrace them was to make choice of the things promised. Abraham chose his prospects in a distant country rather than his possessions in the country of his father; and, in the prosecution of this choice, did he abandon the latter and plainly declare, by all his subsequent doings, that he was seeking and making progress towards the former. And the believer, now-a-days, is not only persuaded that he has heaven for the acceptance of it; but he actually accepts, and in so doing, he, like the father of the faithful, makes a preference between two objects which stand in competition before him. He chooses heaven rather than

arth—the country he has in promise, ather than the country he has in possession—the place where God is revealed n sensible glory, rather than the place iat has been so long unblest and unvisted by any manifestations of His presence—the land of holy and upright and bedient creatures, rather than this land f moral uproar and disorder, where elfishness and sensuality and sin have ethroned the authority of Heaven's law om the hearts of a degenerate family. o make intelligent choice of such a eaven as this, is surely to prefer all that in it and about it, to the world and the ings that are in the world; and the ore that it is true of our nature, and is verred most strenuously in the Bible, iat our affection for both is impossible. he man who chooses heaven rather an earth, chooses what is essentially haracteristic of heaven, rather than hat is essentially characteristic of earth; r, in other words, he makes choice of e piety of heaven, and the purity of eaven and the benevolence of heaven. is not by these that he purchases for imself a place in paradise; but it is by ese, that he prepares himself both for e doings and for the delights of paraise. It is by these, that he brings his ste and his temper into conformity with iat which is celestial. It is by these, iat he becomes a fit recipient for all ose sensations of blessedness which are rrent there. It is not by these, that e secures his right to the inheritance ove; for this was put into his hand at e very outset of his spiritual journey. ut it is by these, that he secures what no less indispensable, he secures in is own person a capacity for the joys that inheritance; and by a transforation of character from the secular to e sacred, he can now breathe with kinred delight in an atmosphere of sacredss.

The point at which heaven is accepted a gift, so far from marking that place the history of a believer when he gives his activity because he has now gotten l that he wants, marks the place of his eaking forth on a career of activity—the entrance of which he was before und by a spell that no exertion of his uld dissipate. It is the very point at which he is released from the bondage of hopelessness; and when, instead of idly aspiring after an object that is unattainable, he sets forth in the prosecution of an object now placed within his reach. It is not in proportion as the freeness of grace becomes manifest to the soul, but just in proportion as it is darkened by the fears and the fancies of legality, that the inquirer is kept back on his journey heavenwards. And it is not true that he has gotten all he wants, when by faith he has gotten his justification. This has done no more for him than to open up the commencement of his path. It has only given him the right of entry into heaven; but it has not given those preparations of the heart and the character, without which heaven would be an abode of weariness. One can conceive that the mere right of entry, may be enough to satisfy the man who is merely persuaded of heaven being by his faith; but it is not enough for the man who has embraced heaven as the chosen good of his existence. Ere he can attain the comfort of heaven, he must work himself into the character of heaven. It is not enough that there be rapture from without. There must be a relish from within. It is a place of happiness to none, but to those who have a heart for its kind of happiness. It is guilt which has closed the gate of heaven against the men of our rebellious generation; and there is not one of them, who would ever labour to qualify himself for the employments or the society of a place that he could not enter. But by the death of Christ, the guilt is washed away; and the gate is opened—and all to whom these tidings of joy come with acceptance, feel as if a fetter had been struck off from their persons, and so set themselves forth to the work of preparation. It is indeed the loosing of a bond, by which they who aforetime were stationary become free to move, and actually do move with alacrity as did the Psalmist. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the

courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord."

At the time when man was exiled from beyond the circle of God's favoured and unfallen creation, he had acquired a guilt by which he forfeited the place of his original settlement; and he had acquired a depravity by which he became incapable both of its duties and its enjoyments. To retrieve this woful departure, so as to be admitted again to the standing which he before occupied—the guilt behoves to be atoned for, the depravity behoves to be done away. For the first, man is as incompetent as he is to liquidate the debt of millions by the produce of his daily labour; and not till the discharge is obtained for him by another, will all his practice in the sight of God be any thing else than presumption, and all his attempts to establish a righteousness of his own, but demonstrate the utter worthlessness and incapacity of him who makes them. For the second he of himself is equally incompetent. But the same Mediator who for him hath wrought the first of these purposes, works in him the second of them. And this he does, not by superseding the activity of man, but by stimulating that activity—not by setting aside the machinery of human will and human intelligence and human action, but by setting to work that very machinery—So that the man who before could not labour with any effect at all, both because he was without strength, and also because the obstacle of unexpiated guilt stood like a wall of iron in his way—now that the obstacle is removed, and now that the power of Christ is made to rest on the person of every honest and aspiring disciple—now begins that great process of transition in his history, by which he departs from the character and the habits of a mere citizen of earth, and plainly declares that his heart is set upon other joys and he desireth a better country that is a heavenly.

But the plain indication which Abraham gave of his seeking another country, than the one which harboured all the friendships and all the interests of nature, is different from the indication given of the same thing by a modern Christian. He demonstrated this by a visible act of locomotion. He simply left the place of his nativity, and went forth in quest of a promised land; and, by a movement palpable to the eye of the body, did he prove that he renounced present things in pursuit of other things which were distant and unseen. The Christian who sets out for the heavenly Canaan, and in so doing takes his departure from the Mesopotamia of this world, has not one mile of locomotion to perform. He makes no visible transference of his person from one place to another; and the whole change that he undergoes, lies in the transference of his affections from one set of objects to another. This journey is altogether a spiritual one; and the progress of it may be traced, not by his distance from an old country and his nearness to a new one—but by his distance from the old character, and his unceasing approximation to a new one. You see plainly where a man is going by the road upon which he travels; and if you can see as plainly what a man is seeking after, by the objects on which his heart is evidently set, then it may be as true of a Christian in our day as it was of Abraham in reference to the promised land, that he declares plainly how heaven is the place after which he aspires—how heaven is the inheritance that he has selected and made choice of as the joy of his heart and his portion for evermore.

In this spiritual movement, there is a something that you have to forsake—not such a forsaking as causes you to go out of the world, but such a forsaking as causes you to give up the world—so that you may truly say, though I am still with thee in presence I am no longer with thee in heart. This implies as painful an abandonment of all that was before desirable and precious to the soul, as the patriarch had to undergo.

For the rich man not to cast away his wealth but to crucify his affections to it—for the man of eminence to become dead to the voice of praise—for the man of sensuality to abstain from every unlawful indulgence, and both to overcome and to mortify all those appetites which war against the soul—for the man of sore and irritable feelings, utterly to quench the anger and the malice and the envy that wont to agitate his heart—for the man of worldliness, in any one shape to arouse him out of its inveteracy, so as

to thwart and entirely to traverse the whole tenor of an existence, that had been devoted to gratifications which are unknown in heaven and which death will put an end to—In all these there is a departure as wide, and in every way as arduous, as is made by him who wrests himself for ever from his native land—a moral transition from one great principle to another, where there is a surrender and a work of separation as violent, as it is possible to conceive in any personal transition from one place to another—a resistance to the solicitations of nature's tenderness and nature's urgency, just as hard to be gone through as is that parting scene where the resolved missionary has to tear himself away from the embraces of weeping relatives; and set forth from his parents' and his sister's home on an unknown pilgrimage, uncheered by the hope, nay steeled against the wish or the purpose of returning to it.

But it were not possible to make a renunciation so mighty, for no positive object either of desire or of endeavour. It does not lie with the heart of man, to forego an old attachment but by the superior power of a new one. He will not force himself away from a scene peopled with delights, for the mere sake of entering on a scene of desolation. It was doubtless a day of gloom to the mind of Abraham, when he bade his long and last adieu to the place of his fathers. But he was not driven to such an exile; he was lured to it by the prospect of another day, which he saw afar off and was glad. And, in like manner, when a Christian is drawn in affection from the world, he is still drawn by the cords of love and the bonds of a man. He is not told to cease his affections from the things that are beneath, without the exhibition of objects better and lovelier than those he is bidden to relinquish, and without being told to set his affections on the things that are above. And there he may behold by faith Christ sitting at the right hand of God; and with an eye of tender solicitude looking towards the world which He died to save; and welcoming every applicant to that fountain of mercy which He Himself has opened; and rejoicing, most sincerely rejoicing, over the approaches to it of every new spiritual patient—(for how is it else that the cause of salvation can be carried forward, a cause on the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set;)—and at the same time demonstrating by His word and example and Spirit, that the way on which the ransomed of the Lord pass over is a way of holiness—Thus binding every follower of His to the righteousness which He Himself loves, and with drawing them from the iniquity which He hateth; and from that beautiful sanctuary which He irradiates by his presence, causing the purity as well as the peace of the upper regions to descend on the soul of the believer. In the heart of every believer there is love to Christ—love to Him for what He is, and therefore admiration of all the graces by which He is adorned. And such is the moral influence of this feeling, that it causes a reflection of these very graces on his own person; and he longs for the society where the alone perfect exhibition of them is to be found; and the way in which he plainly declares himself to be seeking towards it, is by growing every day in the taste and in the acquisition of its moral excellence. Gratitude to Christ seeks to gratify Christ. Love impels to the keeping of His commandments; and following the impulse of these new desires, and labouring in the prosecution of these new interests, does the disciple bespeak the great movement that he has made from that earth which he no longer cleaves to, to that heaven whither all his wishes and all his efforts are continually tending.

Before we conclude, let us offer two remarks, which may serve to explain the precept of laying up treasure in heaven—as it is by our treasure being there, that our heart will be there; and out of the abundance of a heart, so set and so situated, will there come forth such doings as shall declare plainly that we seek a country, which lies on the distance that is on the other side of the grave.

The first way in which we grow in the heavenly riches, is to grow in a heavenly relish for the enjoyments that await us there. To be in heaven without such a relish, were like the possession of an ample fortune, without health or taste or appetite for any one gratification which it can purchase. It is only by cultivating the musical talent, that

you can add to the rapture of the next musical entertainment; and it is only by increasing the spiritual habit of the soul, that you fit the man for breathing with kindred delight in that great spiritual element which composes the air of paradise. It is thus that every addition made to the purity of your character, will render more exquisite your delight in seeing God. Every addition made to the benevolence of your heart, will cause it more joyfully to respond to each note of happiness, which is heard to arise from among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Every addition made to your piety here, will the more heighten your seraphic elevation in that place, where the glories of the Divinity will be expanded visibly before you. Every addition made to the intenseness and constancy of your love to the Saviour, will quicken the more your heart-felt ecstacy as you join in the song of eternal glory to Him, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood. There are two ways in which you may become happier after death, either by obtaining an outwardly better heaven, or by obtaining an inwardly better heart for the enjoyment of it. But there is only one heaven —with a gradation of felicity there, from the variety which obtains in the character and capacity of those who live in it. And thus it is, that though the righteous are to shine as stars, yet it will be as one star differing from another in glory. And thus it is, that you lay up treasure in heaven by an assiduous cultivation of the personal virtues upon earth; and each of these virtues is like another jewel in the crown which is to encircle you; and the man who has got the true heavenly taste, is never satisfied with his present acquisitions, but like Paul he forgets the things that are behind, because there is still a higher eminence before him which he labours to attain: And hence his unceasing diligence to be found without spot and blemish against the day of Christ—labouring after all moral and spiritual perfection; and, with this as the high aim of his existence to which he subordinates every other, declaring plainly that he is in quest of an object which places him far beyond the general pursuits or sympathys of the world.

But secondly, the happiness of heaven is not merely the result of a meetness between its comforts and your character—it is also in part conferred upon you, in the shape of a reward for service. It is given as a return for your good deeds —like wages for work—or payment for a performance, that you have rendered at the will or bidding of a superior. There is at the same time a strong agreement between this way of it, and the former. A series of benevolent actions strengthens the principle of benevolence; and makes you therefore personally more alive to all the delight, that is ever circulating in a region of benevolence. And a series of successful conflicts with the pollutions of the world, strengthens the habit of purity; and makes you partake more largely of the divine nature, and to enjoy with fresher and livelier sensation the ethereal purity that encompasses the divine throne. But in addition to this, there seems to be a boon conferred upon the righteous, specifically and formally as a reward for their distinct services. And thus it is that he who giveth to the poor, will, not only be happier in heaven, on account of the finer and stronger and readier sympathies of kindness that he bears with him from earth. But there will be an actual payment made to him like that of an account with interest, because by giving to the poor he lendeth to the Lord. And in like manner, he who giveth a disciple a cup of cold water shall not lose his reward. And the rich are said to lay up in store for themselves against the time to come, by being rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And alms done in secret shall be rewarded openly. And prayers done in secret in the same way. And on the day of judgment, there will be a specific investigation made of specific deeds of charity; and you will be dealt with according to the principle and amount of them—All proving that by every act of obedience to the will of Christ, you lay up treasure in heaven, and so become richer towards God; and how plainly therefore you may declare that you are seeking after a place among His mansions, simply by a studious and pains-taking conformity to his will—by being stedfast and immoveable and al-

ways abounding in the work of the Lord —forasmuch as you know that your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

And to meet the alarms of orthodoxy upon this subject, let it be remarked, that, though there is no rewardableness in good works under the legal economy, there is under the gospel economy. The law ministers condemnation, and nothing else; and, to flee from its penalties, do we take refuge with the offered Mediator. It is with Him now that we have to do; and while it is in His merit alone that we find a righteousness commensurate to the truth and holiness of the Godhead, to Him do we at the same time concede a right to all our time and to all our services. And this is what He actually claims; and deals out the tokens of His approbation to those who submit themselves; and, as the father of a family has his rewards and his chastisements, so has He; and thus, though redeemed from the curse of the law, we are yet not without law to God because under the law to Christ; and all that is done unto Him is treasured up in His remembrance, and will be brought out in the great day of manifestation, as the proofs of our faith and of our faithfulness—So that it is by unwearied assiduity in His service, by living not to our own will but to His, by abounding in the fruits of that righteousness which He has prescribed to all His disciples—it is thus we shall declare plainly that we seek a country, that we seek the welcome of the judgment-seat, that we seek to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Let us entreat you to lay all this to your consciences. Are you or are you not seeking a country? Many of you are quite familiar with the satisfaction that is felt, when stock is on the increase; when bills and title-deeds of property come abundantly into your possession; and you can read in such documents as these, the authentic vouchers of the wealth that perisheth. Are you as familiar, or rather are you not altogether strange, to the satisfaction which springs from the consciousness of a treasure in heaven—from such an examination of self, as proves you to be sealed by the Spirit of God for an inheritance that never fades —from the account of such virtues and the perusal of such characters upon your person as bespeak you to be a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord? Tell us upon your honesty, ye hearers, whether the whole set of your habits and affections is more upon the acquirement of the first or the second kind of property? More upon the money which purchaseth all things, that serve to build or embellish our abode upon earth; or upon the substance that so endureth as to be of worth in heaven, and to serve for the wear of eternity? And what is the kind of disaster which goes nearest to overwhelm you? Is it the sweep of resistless bankruptcy, that demolishes your fairest prospects in time? Or is it the urgency of some violent and unlooked for temptation, that has well nigh overthrown all those hopes of a blissful immortality, which rest on the basis of experience? O be at length convinced of nature's folly and nature's miscalculation. Let not these seasons which pass in sure and rapid flight over your heads, speak to you in vain. Let the silent eloquence of friends, who, now tombed in their sepulchres, and who in their little day laughed as loudly and thronged as busily for this world's interests as yourselves—let it touch and solemnize you.

And O, though it be a thought of horror—yet if possible to snatch survivors from the gulph of perdition, let us not withhold it—Just think of some such acquaintance—who toiled through life his unwearied round of earthliness, and with all the earthliness of his soul unbroken breathed his last—if from the place of despair he now occupies, he looks back on the land of opportunity and sends forth the bitter and unfruitful longings of his heart for one little hour upon its borders, that he may have another call to repent and another chance for eternity—what he never can obtain you still possess. The gate of Christ's Mediatorship to you is open. The road of access to that fountain which is for sin and uncleanness, is free and open. That redemption which is through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, is held out to every creature who now hears us; and all the portals of reconciliation with the God whom you have offended, are most widely and welcomely open. The farm and the merchandise, and the domestic cares or the domestic comforts, may so engross the soul, and

deafen all its organs of communication—that the voice of the preacher shall be unheeded when he calls you to turn to Christ from your iniquities; and, for the sake of the world that is future, to renounce the present one. But it is his part to preach though at a venture. And he who hath ears to hear, let him hear—that breaking forth from the entanglements of sense, he may turn his path through life into a holy pilgrimage, and so declare plainly that he is seeking a country.

SERMON XXVII.

On the connection between the Incipient Duties, and the Subsequent Experiences of a Christian.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."—LUKE xxiv. 49.

You are aware that there was an interval of forty days, between our Saviour's resurrection from the grave and His ascension into heaven—that during that time He appeared upon various occasions and at various places to his disciples—that among others, He met them as far from Jerusalem as Galilee, whither they had gone, but whence it behoved them to return that they might witness His ascension; for this great event was to take place in the very neighbourhood of the Jewish metropolis; and thither it was appointed that the apostles should repair; and there it was commanded them to wait, till, in the language of our text, "they were endued with a power from on high"—and, as it is expressed in the book of Acts, they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, that is, to wait for a baptism from heaven, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after. There was a scrupulous obedience rendered by the apostles to the commandment. They did travel from Galilee to Jerusalem. They returned to the mount of ascension; and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication even till the promise came upon them, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We hold this narrative, short as it is, and consisting of very few steps, to be replete with soundest instruction; and which, in the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall endeavour to unfold and apply, in some of its leading particulars.

1. By the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were endued with a power, which of course they had not previous to that visitation. "Ye shall receive power," our Saviour said, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." It is a power which they had not, then, before that the Holy Ghost was come upon them. But you will observe that even when destitute of this power, they had a part to act in regard to it; and were the subjects of a precept, that stood connected with the high and heavenly inspiration which was afterwards to descend upon them. There was a plain and practicable bidding laid upon them, which was, to return to Jerusalem and to wait there. They had power for doing this, though they had not yet the power that was to come upon them after doing this. There was a power in their feet, that carried them to the place of assignation. There was a power in their wills that kept them there, and made them resist the movement of any inclination that might have seduced them away from it. There were certain common powers and faculties, which they had along with other men; and by the obediently putting forth of which, in the way that was laid upon them by the authority of the Saviour, they were af-

terwards endued with a power which signalized them above all other men. But meanwhile, they in a plain way, did the plain thing that was required of them. They walked back to Jerusalem, and they stopped there—till the fulfilment of the promise, which was to be realized upon them there. Had they gone elsewhere, or tarried elsewhere, there would have been no such fulfilment. The accomplishment that came after followed in the train of that movement which went before; and the enlargement of spirit, that came upon the apostles in the day of Pentecost, was the distinct consequence of a very plain act of obedience.

The first general process then, which our text exemplifies, is that by which the beginner is guided, from an humbler to a higher acquirement, in the course of his Christian education. It shows how the obedience of such powers as he has, can haste him onward to such larger powers and endowments as he at present has not. It shows that in the inferior stages of discipleship, there is a distinct and tangible something for him to do; and in the doing of which he is at length raised to its more elevated stages. We shall seize upon this narrative as an illustration of the very important principle, that in no part of a believer's progress, not even in the very infancy of it, and further back than this, not even at the time when most sunk in the unconcern of nature and of the world, is there the want of some specific and practicable thing, to which he might and ought to turn himself; and which has a bearing upon the interest of his eternity.

We read of the trumpet giving a certain and an uncertain sound; and a direction which could well be understood and instantly proceeded on by the full-grown Christian, might sound most uncertainly indeed, to the hearing of him who is but a babe in the mysteries of the gospel, and still more of him who has not yet felt one desire or made one movement towards it. Yet there is a way of dealing with them too, there is a word in season for every man; and for them also, there are words which can be spoken seasonably. In that low degree both of understanding and power, which obtained among the apostles, immediately after the resurrection—the direction, given subsequently, and even by themselves in their own epistles, would not then have suited them. They would have felt the obscurity of such sayings, as "quench not the Spirit," and "glory in the cross of Christ," and "have no confidence in the flesh," and "be dead unto the law," and "rejoice in the Holy Ghost." And so, as a high point of wisdom and delicacy, our Saviour, in the treatment of these his immediate disciples, abstained from many things at the first, and limited himself to the utterance of such things as they were able to learn. He fed them with milk, and reserved his strong meat for the manhood of their Christianity. They would have been at a loss with very many of the instructions, which were scattered over their own compositions; but at no loss whatever, how to set about the very obvious bidding of our text—how to make use of their feet in carrying them to Jerusalem, and stedfastly to abide there, till the promised enlargement should come upon them. And there we read that they waited and they prayed, till, as the result of their own performances and God's promise together, they received that from Heaven which raised them nearer to Heaven's light, and love, and liberty; and brought them up to a far higher platform in the ascent of Christian experience.

Now the interesting question is, whether a process similar to this ever obtains in the present day. Is such still the economy of grace, that the obedience which can be accomplished by a lower degree of power, elevates the Christian disciple to a higher degree of it? Will the compliance with such humbler directions as require less of light and knowledge to understand, carry forward the teachable inquirer to more of light and knowledge than he had before? What are the movements that we on earth can perform, so as to meet the influences which are rained down upon us from heaven?—and whither shall we lead our footsteps, that we may receive of some promised enlargement? There is, it would appear, a visitation from on high, by which they who are the subjects of it, become versant in the mysteries of the faith, and have the mark impressed upon them of a very peculiar people. To them the

whole doctrine and phraseology of the gospel are familiar; and many are the truths which spring from that doctrine, and are couched in that phraseology, whereof they both see the meaning and feel the power and the preciousness. To them the trumpet giveth a certain sound, while to them who have never yet been called out of darkness into marvellous light, it may sound most uncertainly. The technicals of Christianity may fall upon their ears, like the vocables of an unknown language. The truths of Christianity may be shrouded from their mental eye, by a veil that looks most hopelessly impenetrable. They may have no sympathy, and no common intelligence, with the children of light; and the question is, whether, with the unintelligence which they have as the children of the world, any space however small can be cleared out before them, on which they might make one step in advance towards the knowledge and the faith which are unto salvation? Is there but one obvious truth on which they might lay palpable hold, and by which they may pluck all the other articles of a recondite Theology from their hiding-place?—or, rather, is there any visible path of access that can lead them to the margin, and at length introduce them within the confines of a spiritual manifestation, whereunto they have not yet been admitted? All which the Bible says of regeneration, and of the righteousness which is by faith, and of the life which is hid with Christ in God, and of walking in the Spirit, and of God's residence within them as if they were the temples which He chose to decorate and in which He loved to dwell,—these, and many other expressions to be found in the pages of the evangelical record, may be as darkly incomprehensible to them, as any cabalistic responses that were ever given forth by the oracles of heathenism; and the question still is, whether for these men of our present generation, we can prescribe a way as plain, as that in which the apostles were bidden walk, when commanded to go to Jerusalem, and there to wait till they were endued with power from on high.

Our general answer to this question is, that, just as Jerusalem was assigned to the apostles, for their place of meeting with the Spirit of God, so still there are places of meeting with the same Spirit assigned for us; and just as easily as they could do as they were bidden, when they went to their prescribed post, so can we do the bidding to repair to ours; that still there lies a distinct call, even upon the uninitiated, who are afar off from the gospel, as well as upon those babes in Christ who are nigh unto its fuller revelations; that still, there is a progression, by which all may come from the acts of a humbler to the powers and the spiritual gifts of a higher obedience; that still there are movements which might be done by us on earth, and by which the earthliest of us all may come within the limits of that influence which falls on certain gracious places in a descending ministration from heaven,—That so all are left without excuse; and will not have to allege on the day of reckoning, at least of every neglected call which has been brought to their door, how, in each instance, it was too hard and too high for them—that their consciences through life, have been repeatedly plied with the obligation of duties as clear as they were urgent and imperative; and to the performance of which, if they had not been wanting to themselves, God would not have been wanting with the aids of his grace, to carry onward their education for heaven—that, in short, for all there is a path which is plain, and a sound which is certain and intelligible,—that many, very many things, are laid upon us, which bear on our future and everlasting interests, the neglect of which can be traced distinctly, not to the want either of power or of understanding, but to the want of inclination—that for these at least we are clearly and fully responsible; and because of these it will be found, not of the not able but of the not willing, that God has wiped His hands of every one of them, and they have themselves to blame for the undoing of their eternity.

But to be more specific. One assigned place of meeting between man and the Spirit of God, is the word of God. In like manner as their ordinary and natural powers took the apostles to Jerusalem, and kept them there—so our natural faculties will avail us so far when put forth upon the Bible. The Bible may be to

us, what Jerusalem was to them. We can at least place it before us; and bind ourselves over to the perusal of it; and direct our eye upon its pages; and give to it the same strenuousness of attention and of thought, that we give to any other composition; and press the understanding, and the memory, and the conscience, and all the other gifts and sensibilities that are within us, into the service of being rightly informed and rightly impressed by it: And this we can persevere in many days, even as the disciples of our Lord tarried for days at the post which was prescribed to them. The Bible is the post prescribed to us. And there is just one thing more to be added, in order to complete the resemblance between the two cases. They waited at Jerusalem, and we are farther informed that they prayed. The promise of God that they should have the Holy Ghost, did not, it would appear, supersede, but stimulate their prayers for its accomplishment. Instead of causing them to give up supplication, it suggested a topic for it. And so let us, to the forth-putting of all the light and strength which we actually have, add our supplications for more. More especially to the earnest heed which we give unto the Bible, let us add our earnest entreaties that God would open our eyes, to behold the marvellous things which be contained in it—let the diligence wherewith we ply all its various passages, be joined with devotion for a blessing upon the exercise—let us look unto the word, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, and look up unto Him, at the bidding alone of whose voice, all the darkness can be dissipated—And just as the first Christians kept by Jerusalem, and in the earnest expectation there of a coming enlargement—So ought we to keep by the Bible, and continue to give earnest heed unto the word of its prophecy, until (to use the very language of the apostle Peter), until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

There is a peculiar fitness in the Bible, as a place of meeting between God's Spirit and man's spirit. It is the very place, through which a conveyance from the one descends upon the other. There is no other inspiration to be expected now-a-days, than simply the word of God being made clear and impressive o us. When the Holy Ghost speaks to us, He makes use of no other vocables than the words of Scripture. When He illuminates the soul, it is by a lustre reflected upon it from the pages of Scripture. When He bears upon the conscience, it is with the urgency of some truth or some moral lesson, the whole letter and expression of which are to be found in the Scripture. He does not operate on the mind of man, but by putting Himself into contact with the Scripture. And man ought not to look for this operation, but by just, on the other hand, bringing himself into contact with this said Scripture. The Bible, ye hearers, the Bible is the place of concourse between the celestial influence from above, and the terrestrial subject that is below—the common ground on which the two parties hold their conference the one with the other, and where the earnestness of man meets with the visitation of that God who rewards them who seek Him diligently. It is here, if any where, that if we draw near unto God, God will draw near unto us. This is the field where the treasure lieth hid, to find which you must dig up and down upon it; and if you should not have succeeded, we have no other direction to give, than that you must just dig over again. It is in the perusal and the re-perusal of Scripture, that you can obtain and make sure of the pearl of great price; and the truth, and the power, and the enlargement which you are in quest of, are all embosomed there. The word is the intermedium between God and man; and it is through it, and it only, that the light of inspiration is given. You are at your post, when, in the act of reading God's word, you may be said to place yourselves beside that intermedium, and there to listen for that voice of efficacy, which might transform you into a new creature. You may have to wait; but there is every assurance that no honest inquirer shall have to wait in vain: and we believe it to be unexcepted, in the whole history of the Church, that, wherever there has been a desirous and a devoted attendance upon the word, there the demonstration of the Spirit has been added to it.

Is there any here present, who, still a stranger to the light and liberty of the

gospel, has to complain that long and wearily he has knocked at a door which he cannot open? Perhaps he may have been reading without prayer, as many do, who, acquitting themselves of their daily chapter, drivel out their time at a formal and fruitless task-work. Then he is like what the apostles would have been, had they gone to Jerusalem, but sent up no supplication to heaven there. Or perhaps, under a sense of darkness and discomfort, he may have been praying for enlargement out of the straitening which oppresses him; but not looking to the Bible as the only channel through which the light of life is to flow in upon his soul, as the appointed place where the answer is to come, he may just have fared as the apostles would have done, had they not followed the order of going to Jerusalem; but at some other part than that which was prescribed to them, thought of making up by the strenuousness of their devotions for their palpable act of disobedience. You are on the one hand bidden to search the Scriptures, and on the other hand to ask for the Spirit. Without the one, you will never find, in their power and in their preciousness, the truths which lie deposited in the other. Still these truths are to be gotten at a certain and specified place; and if away from the place, the help of the Spirit will be of no avai to you.

To the apostles was offered the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem; and to you there is the offer of the same Holy Ghost, in the act of giving your diligent and desirous attendance upon the Bible. The compound direction under which you lie, is, to seek for something in a given place, where that something is to be found; and to take the aid of an able auxiliary along with you. If not at the place, you will seek in vain; and if you have not the aid you will also seek in vain. The Spirit sent forth upon the soul, is no mystic or undescribable afflatus; and all his teaching, indispensable as it is, is couched and embodied in the literalities of Scripture. You may have read, it availeth not if you do not pray; you may have prayed, it availeth not if you do not read. They are the readings and the prayers together which avail you. There are many of this careless and unthinking generation who do neither: and there be some, with whom these exercises are prosecuted apart—we do not mean apart in time, but apart as to all dependence the one upon the other. We ask you to proceed on the harmony that is between them—to knock at no other door than the door of Scripture for Heaven's inspirations; and at the same time to know, that, unless Heaven be addressed by your earnest and persevering entreaties, these inspirations never will be given.

And now for those, who, to justify their irreligion, complain that a plain path hath never been set before them,—that they might have been Christians had it not been for the hieroglyphical obscurity in which Christianity is shrouded —that they have not yet made one movement towards it, because they know not where to place their next footstep, and are quite sure that they could never find their way through its points and its paradoxes. It is thus they would excuse themselves —while all the while their Bible lies unopened—while the plain question, "of what readest thou," remains unanswered —while, to solve this question, they give no time, either to perusals or to praying. And with a readable volume to lie beside them, and invite their eye upon its pages; and with the promise of that merciful Heaven which smiles so benignantly upon them, and offers to unravel for them all its mysteries—it is in the midst of such facilities as these, they will persist in their apathy, though at the very opening of that career which leads to Heaven's bliss and to Heaven's glory. It is not because the way is inaccessible, but because the spells of earth and of earthliness have bound them. They have no right to complain of a hedge across their path. It is the manacle of their own hearts' choice and nothing else, which so detains and fastens them among the treacherous delights of the world. There has been pointed out to them a way as specific, as that which led the apostles of our Lord to Jerusalem. There has been made to them a promise as sure, as that of the power by which the apostles were endued from on high. And if during your short-lived day, you choose to give all your energies to its business and its pleasures—if in the unabated fervour wherewith ye ply your busy round among the interests and gratifications of sense

you are scarcely, if ever, arrested a single hour for one pause or one preparation of seriousness—The great searcher of hearts will Himself not only pronounce but vindicate your doom, when He tells from the judgment-seat, of the Bible that He sent and the Spirit that he offered to you.

Nor is it enough to vindicate your unconcern, that the evidence for this Bible is still unseen by you—that you have yet met with nothing to over-power you into the conviction of its truth—that, for aught you know, it may be the record of a base and unprincipled imposture, instead of an authentic and authoritative message from the upper sanctuary. The Bible may not stand forth in such characters of certainty, as to compel your instantaneous belief; and yet stand forth in such characters of likelihood, as to challenge your instant and most serious inquiry. We do not require of you to believe in the absence of proof; but we require of you to peruse and to ponder and to investigate, in the midst of many semblances and many probabilities. We do not affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, you will see as much as to force the whole system of its doctrines and articles at once into your creed; but we affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, there appears as much on its forehead as should constrain your candid and respectful attention to it. It is not our demand, that you should believe without inquiry; but it is our demand that you should not reject without inquiry. We do not say there is enough in and about the Bible, to dogmatise you into the sudden assurance of its infallibility; but we say, that, in and about this Bible, there is enough to rivet your regards, and rebuke away all your heedlessness. How, I would ask, have you disposed of the history of its miracles? And how of that magnificent train of prophecy, that so accords with the general march and movement of our world? How have you contrived to resist the appeal, which is made in behalf of Scripture, by the existence of the Jews as a separate and monumental nation? Or have you so mastered the records of other times, as to warrant your summary rejection of a volume, that so many of the wise and the good in all ages have revered? Or have you looked into its pages; and, putting your hand upon your bosom, can you honestly say, that you have discovered no characters of truth and of sacredness; and that you have met with no one presumption on its side, either in the loftiness of its morality, or its searching discernment into the human spirit? Still we do not ask your faith, till the evidences of its truth have been manifested; but we ask your faithful and assiduous inquiries, till you have the manifested evidence of its falsehood. We beg you not to look so safe and so satisfied, in your habitual neglect of this religion, as if imposture were plainly and palpably written on the face of it: And we put the question—whether, with nothing to lose if it be false, and every thing to lose if it be true, you would hazard one earthly interest that belongs to you, in the way that the contemners of the gospel of Jesus Christ have staked the fortune of their eternity? O, they have done repeated violence, even to the light and the voice of nature, in their treatment of Christianity; and when visited, as they have sometimes been, with the suspicion that they are wrong, their own natural conscience hath testified against them.

The Bible, with its many probabilities that should urge them to begin the investigation, and its many proofs that would have met and multiplied upon them ere they had gotten to the end of it—this Bible when opened in the day of reckoning, will be their coming witness; and will furnish against them many a clear principle of condemnation. He who ponders the heart, and hath an eye upon all its secrets, will bring out the lurking unfairness to the light of day—will uncover the moral perversity that hung at the bottom of it all—will make it clear to every looker-on, that never in one instance, has a thorough earnestness after truth, missed of evidence enough for all the truth which is unto salvation; that if any did not see, it was because they did not seek; that if strangers to the light, it was because they shut their eyes against it; that if they abode in darkness, it was because they loved the darkness and chose to abide in it. It is not that they had no proof for the ways of God; but that they had no pleasure in these ways—not that there was a want of harmonious and

convincing doctrine on His part, but a want on theirs of any desire after it: and this is the condemnation, that their desires were away from heaven and bent upon earth—that, whatever the decencies of their outer man, these deeds of the inner man were evil.

We have expatiated so long on this one illustration wherewith our text has furnished us, that not enough of time is left, for other and similar illustrations. The general principle of them all is, that we creatures on earth, are not left unbidden and untold of some one movement that each of us can make; and in the making of which, we shall meet, if we will, some farther light and influence from heaven. The apostles could not take the celestial flight of following the Lord Jesus Christ in the air; but they could at least perform the terrestrial motion of a walk to Jerusalem—and there it was that a power and an enlargement from above came upon them. We cannot, in the words of Paul, we cannot ascend up on high, and thence bring down the light of God's sanctuary upon our soul—We cannot descend into the deep, and thence bring up any secret thing from its unfathomable recesses; but we can at least go to the word which is nigh unto us, and from the Spirit through the medium of the word, get all that is needful of Heaven's power and Heaven's illumination. The Bible stands to us, in place of Jerusalem to the first disciples; and many other are the ordinances of God, each of which may be regarded in the light of a waiting-post—where if we do some palpable things that lie within the compass of human hands, and have the desire which should be felt in sincerity and should issue in prayers from human hearts, God will not fail of the grace and the loving-kindness, that He has promised to all who seek him diligently. This view of the matter, stamps a peculiar and characteristic value, on all that might he termed the ordinances of religion. They are such things as man can do in the letter of them; and in the doing of which, with hearts of desire and hands of diligence, God will pour forth of the Spirit upon them. They offer precisely those occasions, in which God and man meet as fellow-workers towards the same end: when without the co-operation of the on nothing will be given, and without the co-operation of the other nothing will be received. The Sabbath is just such an ordinance; for you can then rest, and abstain from all earthly business, and read books of sacredness, and give your presence to the solemn assembly, and perform certain movements which may be said to be terrestrial, and put yourself into certain attitudes which are also terrestrial; and to all which done by you below, if you are only prompted by a seeking heart, a celestial virtue from above will be given. In the opinion of some, the table of the Lord has a converting as well as a confirming efficacy; and they will look on the sacrament of the Supper as such another ordinance. And most certain it is, that the church whither you repair in obedience to the precept of "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," is precisely such an ordinance. This is a Jerusalem to which you are bidden as the place of your weekly resort; and you are at an assigned post, when your feet stand within its gates. Thither do the worshippers of the Lord go up, unto the testimony of Jesus; and there do they give thanks to the remembrance of His name. Where two or three are met together in that name, there He is in the midst of you. This is one of the chosen spots which He loves to bless and to hallow; and it is here of all other places, where the presence of man meets with the promise of God. Without attendance upon Church, you may fare as the apostles would have done, had they not waited at Jerusalem; and still if it is but the attendance of heartless and hackneyed formality, you may fare even as they would have done, had they waited at Jerusalem, but had not prayed. To the duteous regularity of your presence, add the devoutness of your prayers; and here too living water will descend, and sons and daughters will be turned unto righteousness.

Some there are who despise the ordinances. They have no right to imagine that the Spirit will be theirs. Others there are who rest upon the ordinances; and to them the Spirit will be as little given. It is only to them who are found at the prescribed place upon earth, that we can

expect the counterpart promises of heaven to be fulfilled. But then they must have a dependence and a desire towards the promises—And so while we would exact from you an assiduous church-going—we would bid you look up assiduously to that quarter whence alone the blessing and the efficacy are to come.

SERMON XXVIII.

Connection between Faith and Peace.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—ROMANS v. 1.

It is, in the first place, evident, that no man can have true faith in God, whose faith does not extend to the whole of God's testimony. If He choose to deliver more than one intimation, we cannot be said to put faith in Him—unless we give credit, not to one only, but to all His intimations. And this of necessity conducts us to the inference, that, if faith attach itself only to a few particulars of God's communication; or if certain portions of Scripture be dwelt upon with a warm and special satisfaction, while other portions are entertained with coldness, or resisted in the plain and obvious meaning of them by an overstretched application of the favourite doctrine—Or, in other words, if the faith be partial, it is not real.

But, in the second place, it is a very possible thing, that a man may possess a general belief in God's testimony, without directing a strenuous attention, or bestowing a fixed and steady regard, on any one of its particulars. He may vaguely admit the trueness of all; and yet not actually believe the trueness of any. He may be able to demonstrate, how the abuses of one doctrine are restrained by the faithful applications of another doctrine; and that therefore any such abuses can never be chargeable on the true faith which embraces both, but only on the spurious faith which has adopted the one while it has rejected the other. And yet all the while he may just have as little of the true faith, as the man whose error he has completely demolished by the power of his argument. He may be quite triumphant in his reasoning, when he vindicates justifying faith from the imputation of Antinomianism. But while he thus reasons, and incontrovertibly too, about the relation and the influence and the bearing of the several doctrines of Christianity on each other, each individual doctrine may of itself have failed to make its distinct lodgement in his understanding, and its distinct impression upon his heart. The whole matter may yet have come to him in word only and not in power; and the words or terms which he employs, and are expressive of the doctrine in question, may be no more than the symbols made use of in a logical process, which is conducted by him at the same time with the skill and the soundness of a logic that is quite unexceptionable; and thus the whole matter may come to him, both in word and in argumentation, and yet not come in power. On every subject, indeed, there is a great danger of the mind satisfying itself with rapidly-sketched generalities, without appropriating in detail their several and distinct truths. In the case of Christianity, this danger is fearfully aggravated—where one may have a literal discernment of its truths, without a saving and a spiritual discernment of them. Let us therefore be careful to attend to each of them severally and particularly; and, instead of counting it enough that we bestow one comprehensive glance upon the whole—let us feel that if we give not earnest heed to each of the things that we read in this book, we neglect the great salvation that is unfolded in it.

He who has a true faith, will admit all

the known articles of Christianity into his belief; and he will give his earnest endeavour to the object of ascertaining these articles; and he will dwell at distinct times distinctly upon each of them; and this faith of his, while it embraces all, will also single out each as a separate object of attention; and the business of each will be pressed home on occasions of need upon the understanding and the heart. And here it is altogether worthy of remark, that, though faith includes as the object of it the whole testimony of God, yet it is by faith exercising itself on each portion of that testimony, that the influence or the benefit of that portion is realised to the believer. If he merely cast a summary look at the whole, even though it be a look of acquiescence, he may still miss every distinct benefit of that salvation which is unto all and upon all who believe. He may profess an acquiescence in the whole, and yet be a stranger to the habit of acting faith in any particular. Now it is by the distinct acting of his faith in some particular of the divine testimony, that a particular promise is fulfilled to him; or a particular privilege made good to him; or a particular necessity met and relieved. When our Saviour was asked to cure a man in the gospels, He did not demand of him at the time whether he believed that Christ was able to do all things—but whether he believed that He was able to do this thing; and according to his belief so was the thing done unto him. When we ask for wisdom, we are required to ask it in faith; and the object of the faith is that God giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. When we ask for the Spirit, the belief that bringeth down a fulfilment of our petition, is the belief that God giveth His Spirit to them who ask it. When we obtain forgiveness through faith, it is specifically stated in the Bible, that it is through faith in the blood of Christ. Each truth of Christianity forms a distinct topic for the exercise of faith; and it is when the faith so exercises itself, that the good corresponding to that truth is realised to the believer. Doubtless, some of these truths have a more pervading influence over the range of Christian contemplation; but an inquirer may lose himself in the comprehensiveness of his views. He may so generalize his survey, as to overlook particulars. It is true that a real faith will have room for all that is known to be of divine attestation. But each distinct attestation will be entertained, will be dwelt upon, will be turned to its appropriate use, will be viewed in its connection with the others; and, so far from excluding these others, the attention and the trust and the interest which have been attached to this one, will form the best guarantee for all of them properly exercising the mind, and properly influencing the conduct of the believer.

And if there be one doctrine of more primary and pervading importance than another, it is that which relates to the question of our justification before God. Disguise it as he will, there is not a rational man who feels himself on terms of solid confidence, with the Being who made and who sustains him. There is not one of them who can look God fully and fearlessly in the face, and say of Him that He is my friend. There is a lurking suspicion about Him, in virtue of which the creature shrinks from the Creator, and flies away from the thought of Him, to such perishable vanities as may grant him temporary relief or occupation. Conceive his intercourse with the visible world to be in some way suspended, and the invisible God to draw near by some convincing manifestation; and he would not feel at ease or comfort in his presence. Let the feeling be as deep and inexplicable as it may, still is terror at God, the real and the powerful and the constant feeling of nature. As inferior animals flee from the presence of man, even though they know not whether it be friendship or hostility that is in his bosom—so there is in man the same instinctive dread of the Deity. And there is doubtless a foundation for it. There is the consciousness of guilt There is the uncontrollable sentiment of a power, which can carry all its purposes into execution, and which he has done nothing and can do nothing to propitiate. There is the haunting idea of a great and righteous Monarch, who can summon all creation into His presence, and sweep all iniquity and whatsoever offendeth away from Him. The sinner who has his mind darkened, as well as his

heart alienated from God, may not clearly perceive the connection between his sin and his fearfulness. It may be as much of a sensitive, as it is of an intelligent recoil, from the great Lawgiver. But is not this saying enough for the wretchedness of his condition, that, to make it tolerable, God must not be thought of but forgotten; and that, to secure him ease, he must so surround himself by the idolatry of sense, as to intercept from the eye of his mind that unseen Spirit, from whence he took his origin; and that, to enjoy time without disturbance, he must shut out the view of an approaching eternity; and that he cannot brave the realities which are before him and around him, but must bury his intoxicated soul in delusion that he may gain the respite of his present transitory life, from a state of darkness and dreariness and despair? This is the real and universal way in which Humanity, when awake to her own condition, stands moved with reference to God. It is a state of fear, and a state of antipathy. The question may be shunned and lie dormant, for months and for years, amongst those numberless expedients of diversion, by which the God of this world confirms the empire of deceitfulness over his infatuated victims. But if ever it be fairly looked to, such is the actual revolt of man from the God who formed him. And the death which carries his disembodied spirit to the God who gave it; and the judgment which brings the piercing eye of omniscience, upon all the secrecies of his heart and history; and the dissolution of the present system of things, in which he now screens himself from the Deity as in a hiding-place: and the immortality, throughout the whole of which he conceives that there will be no intervening materialism to stand between himself and the Being with whom he has to do—all these suggest the idea of God and man being brought into nearer or more visible contact with each other; and let Nature say herself, whether she feels more attracted or repelled by it—let her answer, whether the prospect of these things look inviting or formidable to her eye: And is it not clear that God is felt by man as an enemy, if every event by which man is brought nearer to God is thus associated with the anticipations and the images of terror?

In these circumstances, a restoration to the divine favour must be a question as big with interest to man, as the question of a passage from death unto life. It stands identified with the main object of his existence. If it remain unsettled, all theology is superfluous, and but the mockery of a heartless speculation. That man should seize upon this as a preliminary question, and give to it his first and his foremost earnestness, is just saying that man, after he has become an inquirer into the things of God, still cannot escape from the urgency of the principle of self-preservation. Let us cease to wonder, then, that the topic of acceptance with God should have so exercised the minds of the men of all ages; or that they should have directed their longing attention to a matter so important, and at the same time so personal, as that turning point, at which God, from the enemy of a restless and terrified sinner, becometh his friend.

But the question, how shall God, from the enemy of man become his friend, just resolves itself into the question, how shall man be justified before God? Had man rendered a full obedience, it would not have been a merciful but a righteous thing for God, to have favoured and cherished and rewarded him. But man has not rendered this obedience; and while therefore it is a merciful thing for God to take him into acceptance, let us beware of thinking that this is done in such a way, as not to make it a righteous thing also. If done in the latter case, it must be as righteous a proceeding, as it would have been if done in the former case. There may be a special putting forth of one attribute, in this dispensation of favour to the guilty—but not to the disparagement or the letting down, of another attribute. The character of the Deity, we may be assured, will sustain no mutilation by any one act in the moral administration of the Deity; and unless the truth and the holiness and the justice and the other perfections of God give their full consent to the exercise of His mercy, then the exercise of His mercy is impossible. Accordingly when we read, in the New Testament, of that salvation which is unto the sinner—this is spoken of as done for him by grant-

ing him a righteousness, as well as by granting him the remission of his sins. He is, somehow or other, invested with a righteousness, which renders it a just thing in God to justify him. There is no man, we believe, who is visited with a real and practical earnestness in the work of seeking after God, who will ever feel himself in grounded and settled peace, on the imagination of a bare act of mercy in his behalf. He will not obtain a secure and firm repose on any such foundation—and will thus in spite of himself, offer an involuntary homage to the holy and inflexible attributes of the Godhead. He will seek for a something which he might render up unto those attributes, and by which he might make them propitious to himself; and therefore it is always the question of longing, restless and dissatisfied nature,—"Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord and bow myself unto the most high God?"

In the prosecution of the following discourse let us endeavour, in the first place, to explain the meaning of the term justify—in the second place, to show how it is that we are justified by faith—in the third place, how it is that by this faith we have peace with God—and lastly point your attention more particularly to Jesus Christ, as the medium of conveyance—through which we obtain so inestimable a blessing. We may then conclude with a few such observations as the whole topic is fitted to suggest.

To justify a man, is sometimes used in the sense, of to vindicate him from the charge of having done that which is evil. If he be made the subject of a criminal imputation, of which you succeed in proving him to be clear, you justify him from that imputation. If something be laid to his charge, and you undertake his defence and make out his innocence, you justify him from the charge. It certainly is oftener understood in the sense—to make out his innocence of what is wrong—than to make out his pretension to what is positively righteous. So that the word "to justify," in its common acceptation, is not so comprehensive of meaning as the word to vindicate. You may justify a man of an alleged transgression, so as to ward off from his person the punishment that is annexed to it. In so doing you certainly vindicate his innocence. But the office of vindicating may be carried farther than to this negative performance. You may also vindicate a man's positive title to the reward, that is annexed to a particular service, or a particular act of laborious obedience and virtue. By the one office you prevent the threatened penalty from falling upon his head. By the other you make clear his title, and obtain the investiture of his person with the promised reward.

So that the meaning of the term to justify in this verse, deviates in two particulars from the term in its common and general acceptation. In the first place we cannot prove any man to have been personally clear of those offences, which constitute him a sinner at the law of God. We cannot overturn the fact, of his having been a sinner throughout the whole of his past history; and that he is therefore in himself the subject of a righteous condemnation. Neither can we overturn the fact, of his being a sinner still; and that therefore if God were now to set up his law with its proclaimed sanctions in judgment over him, He, under this examination also, would reiterate upon him the sentence of condemnation. The whole gospel proceeds upon the fact, that in man himself there is no righteousness before God; and yet it unfolds to us the possibility of man being righteously made the subject of acceptance and reward. Man is not a righteous person; and yet, in some way or other, it can be made a just thing to treat him as a righteous person—not merely a merciful, not merely a generous, not merely a compassionate thing, but positively a just thing to admit him into the rewards of righteousness. In ordinary language, to justify a man, is to make out for him a plea of innocence, grounded on the facts of his own personal history; and when such a plea is made out, there is made out along with it a right in his favour to have the penalty or the chastisement remitted to him. To justify a man, in the evangelical sense of the term, we cannot possibly make out a plea grounded on the fact of his own personal innocence; but still a plea is found, in virtue of which justice requires that he should be treated as an innocent person. He cannot be so justified, as that it were a just thing to say of him—he has acquitted himself throughout the whole of his

past life, and is now acquitting himself, as a holy righteous and innocent person—But he can be so justified, as that it should become a just thing to treat him, as if he ever had been, and still were, a righteous holy and innocent person. But while we thus advert to the distinction between justification in the gospel sense of it, and the same term in its common acceptation; let us never at the same time forget, that the justification of the gospel is totally distinct from a simple ministration of favour and forgiveness to the guilty. The benefit which a sinner receives, who is simply forgiven, is a matter of pure kindness. The benefit which the same sinner receives, in consequence of being justified, is a matter of desert. He may not deserve the benefit in his own person. The desert may not be his own. He may not have acquired a title to the benefit by any self-exertion; but it is of importance to remark that a title, he, in some way or other, has gotten. By the gospel, the same good-will, and the same happiness, which is the fruit of that good-will, are conferred upon the sinner, that would have been conferred upon him, had he, instead of a sinner, been perfect in all the duties and in all the services of loyalty. But the great peculiarity of the gospel lies in this, that, before it forgives the sinner, it, in some way or other, invests him with a claim to forgiveness—before it grants him a reward, it grants him a right to it. There is a something attached to him, which renders it a righteous thing for God to treat him as a righteous person. He obtains remission and reward; but not till by being justified, he obtains a title to them. Ere the dispensation of gospel mercy can take effect, it must be made a righteous dispensation; and it is this which constitutes the great peculiarity of its character—by which both the guilty are invested with a title to that which they receive, and the Giver displays holiness and justice and truth in the ministration of His kindness to the guilty.

And let it further be observed—that, to arrive at the evangelical meaning of the term justification in its whole extent, we must understand it in the fullest sense of the word vindication. The man who is justified, is not merely in possession of a title to have all penalties remitted to him; but he is in possession of a title to have rewards conferred upon him. God not only forbears to treat him as a subject of condemnation; but He treats him as a subject for the positive distribution of His favours. Did the privilege stop short at the making out of a release from punishment, the sinner would be delivered from the wrath that is to come; but he might ever afterwards remain an object of indifference to the Eternal. But the transition he makes by being justified, is far wider than this. The man from an object of wrath, becomes an object of fatherly affection. He is rescued from a fearful looking for of judgment; and he becomes an heir, an expectant of promise. He obtains something more than a deed of acquittal. He obtains a deed of wisest and most abundant conveyance; and, instead of having a midway place assigned to him between hell and heaven, the right he acquires is so comprehensive, as to secure for him, by one and the same charter, a rescue from the wretchedness of the one, and a translation into the bright glories and felicities of the other.

Now it may be thought, that, to change the prospect of sinners from a place of torment to a place of blessedness and triumph—nothing more is necessary than a simple putting forth of divine tenderness, and a simple manifestation of the divine will. But to give these sinners, not merely a permission but a right to the tree of life—to clear away all the incapacity which attached to their state of guilt—to crown with honour the transgressors of the law, and at the same time to magnify the law itself—to vest with the title-deeds of a full and finished obedience, those, who, from the fulfilment of that obedience, had fallen so utterly away—to devise for them such a path of transference from the one place to the other, that mercy could not only lift her song of gratulation; but justice, stern, vindictive, incommutable justice, could shield and secure their entrance to the city which hath foundations—for God to welcome them into His own presence, not in the capacity of forgiven men in whose behalf He had recalled the truth of His own denunciations, but in the capacity of justified men on whom it was a righteous thing to bestow the reward of loyal and of rendered services—to turn His throne into a throne of grace, and at the same

time to preserve and to manifest its character as a throne of righteousness—This it is which gives its grand peculiarity to the dispensation of the gospel, and makes it to be both the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Let us now endeavour in the second place to explain how it is that we are justified by faith.

We say of a room, that it is lighted by the opening up of a window; and yet the window only transmits the light, which is given out by the Sun in the firmament. We say of a human body, that it is nourished by the act of eating; and yet by that act, we only take in the food which is the cause and the source of nourishment. We say of the holder of a deed of conveyance which has been gratuitously conferred upon him, that, by this holding, he possesses a title to certain properties; and yet he neither originated the deed, nor drew up the deed, nor granted the deed—he simply received the deed. And so it is, when we say of a man, that he is justified by faith. He who is so justified, is in possession of a discharge from the penalties of a broken law, and of a right to the rewards of an honoured and of a fulfilled law. But faith did not work out this discharge, faith did not establish this right, faith barely imports these privileges from the quarter in which they are framed; and thus brings them into contact with the person of the believer.

We know, that there is a jealousy about this point among theologians, and a fear, lest, by assigning too high an office to faith, the honour of Christ be infringed, as the alone author of justification. It is He in fact who achieved the whole of this benefit; and man receives of it by the act of believing. Man is not in any way the author of this work—he only obtains the good of it by giving credit to the author. Christ reared the foundation—man leans upon it. He does no more than is done by the malefactor, who holds out his hand to the reprieve which has been made out for him; and thus acquires a warrant for his discharge.

And it will serve still more to exalt the one party, and to annihilate the other, in his transaction—when man sets himself in good earnest to the work of believing—when he sends out his mind, as it were, in repeated efforts, to lay hold of the truth which is unto salvation; and as often retires dejected and baffled by the fruitless undertaking—when he wearies himself out with diligence and prayer; and, after the tarrying of weeks or months or years, still finds that he cannot pluck this pearl of great price from its hiding-place—when, instead of creating light for himself, he finds that he must knock for it at the door of a sanctuary which he cannot open—Should God at length meet this inquirer, and shed the powerful demonstration of His Spirit over the doctrine he is in quest of—he will not be the man who aspires to a share in the glory of his own redemption, or counts upon his faith as an independent contribution which he has brought to the cause. This very faith he will acknowledge to be a gift; and, like the paralytic who is asked to stretch out his hand to an offered alms and receives power along with the offering, he, under a sense of nothingness, will feel that to himself belongs all the gratitude of his deliverance, and to God belongs all the glory of it.

Meanwhile, faith, though neither the procuring cause nor the meritorious ground of justification, is indispensable to it; and just as much so, as the striking out of a window is to the lighting of an apartment. It is the medium of conveyance, through which God hath ordained that all the blessings, purchased and wrought for by the Saviour of sinners, shall come into contact and appropriation with the sinner's soul. We are sensible, that something like an efficient importance is given to faith, by such expressions as the righteousness of faith, and that by faith we are justified—But never is it intended, that faith hath wrought out for us a righteousness; and only, that it affords a passage through which all the privileges of a righteousness already prepared, may be conveyed to the believer. A man must believe, ere he can be dealt with by God, as if, in the reckoning of God, he were a righteous person. But still it is the everlasting righteousness which Christ hath brought in, that is so reckoned to him. When justification is spoken of, the near and the natural question for him who desires to obtain it, is—what for this purpose must I person-

ally do, or what must I personally become? This suggests a competition, not between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of man, but between one personal condition of man in respect either of state or of performance and another. The question—"what shall I do to be saved?" points the attention of him who offers to resolve it, to an alternative between the efficacy of a man's doing for this object, and the efficacy of a man's believing for it. When the whole efficacy is given to the latter, it is for the purpose of setting aside altogether the efficacy of the former; and to decide for man the interesting question of what that single thing is, which he has personally to attend to in order to be justified before God. The question, whether my faith or the work which Christ hath finished is the efficacious principle of my salvation, presents another alternative, and there is nothing in the first solution, which ought to darken or to embarrass the second. Strange if man should arrogate a glory to himself, because told to do that thing by which in fact the whole glory of his salvation is awarded to another—if the law of faith, the declared effect of which is to exclude boasting, should be so perversely understood as to encourage it; or if that doctrine should go to mar and to divide the glory of Christ, by which we are led to look to Him alone for salvation.

Your salvation, says St. Paul, is by grace, and through faith; and not of works lest any man should boast. Were a competition on the question what shall man do to be saved, started between man's faith and man's works, this apostle would decide it to be altogether of faith and not of works. Were it a question, whether does salvation come of God's giving or of man's believing, and a competition started between grace and faith, the apostle would decide that it was by grace and through faith. Were the question, whether is it God who gives it or man who works for it, and the competition between grace and works, the apostle has bequeathed us his decision upon this too in the following memorable sentence—"If by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

We now proceed to observe, that faith is no faith at all, if it embrace not the whole testimony of God. But the benefits annexed to faith are various. There is forgiveness promised to it. There is the plea and the reward of righteousness promised to it. There is strength for holy obedience promised to it. Now faith, in the act of bringing home as it were each of these benefits, attaches itself at the time to a particular and corresponding portion of the testimony; and what portion of the testimony is that to which faith attaches itself, when, through it as a medium of conveyance, the privilege of justification comes into the possession of a believer?

It is that portion, in which the narrative of Christ's work for our justification is laid before us. It is that portion, which relates to the death and the obedience of Christ. By the one He offered Himself up as a propitiation for the sins of the world; and those of the world who believe in this, have their sins remitted to them. By the other, that is by His obedience, which comprehends His death, He fulfilled the righteousness of the law; and this righteousness it is testified to us that He fulfilled in our stead; and the merit of this righteousness is imputed, and the reward of it is assigned unto all, and is upon all who believe.

There has a distinction been made between His passive and His active obedience. By the one He is conceived to have expiated sin, by bearing in His own person the punishment which sinners should have borne. By the other He is conceived to have acquired for them a righteousness by rendering in His own person, that perfect obedience which they should have rendered. Certain it is that His work is commensurate to the whole extent of their justification. It accomplished for them the remission of the penalty. It accomplished for them their right to a reward. And the oft-repeated doctrine of the Bible is, that we obtain this right and this remission by faith—that by faith we are justified—that the righteousness of Christ is unto those who believe—that it is a righteousness made up of the works of Jesus Christ, and is alto-

gether separate from any righteousness which may be conceived to reside in the works of the sinner—and that upon his believing, it is not what he hath done for himself, but what Christ hath done for him, which is imputed unto him for righteousness.

So that man is accepted into forgiveness and favour, not on account of any righteousness of his own—but on the righteousness of Christ being put to his account; and it is counted to him on his becoming a believer. He stands before God in the name of the Lord his righteousness; and the reward due to this righteousness is made his reward. His own personal guilt has been laid upon Christ; and on him it has been expiated. The merit of Christ is laid upon himself, and in himself it is rewarded. His sin put to Christ's account, and Christ's righteousness put to his account, changes altogether his relation with the Lawgiver whom he had offended. From an heir of wrath, he becomes a child of adoption; and, at that point of marvellous transition when belief enters in, he is vested with all the rights and translated into all the privileges of the sons of God.

And thus all we have said of justification in the general, is confirmed and appears in greater distinctness, when we come to view the ground of justification. A man is justified, but not on the ground of anything he deserves in himself. It is on the ground of what another has wrought for him, and deserved for him. He is held to be righteous in respect of claim, though he is not righteous in respect of actual character. It would not be true to say of him, that, as he is in himself, he is a righteous person. But it is just on account of the relation that he bears to another, to treat him as a righteous person. The righteousness, in fact, which avails him for being justified, has a forensic and not a personal acceptation. It is that by which he is held righteous in law, though not in fact—by which the sentence of guilt is taken off, and he is discharged from the penalty—by which the sentence is utterly converted, and he is invested with a title to the reward.

And you further see, how this treatment of the sinner stands distinguished altogether, from a simple and direct ministration of kindness to him. It is the kindness of God to him, no doubt; but a kindness which feels itself at freedom to expatiate, on account of a consideration rendered to the justice of God. Mercy did not reach in a direct way the accomplishment of her object; though it was mercy that instigated the whole of that process, by which the object has been gained. It was not the deed of mercy awake, while other attributes were sleeping. All of these, if we may so speak, were at their post; and all of them gave assent to this lofty and mysterious device of man's restoration. So that though his salvation be a boon, it is not a simple deed of favour and forgiveness which is put into his hand. But it is a deed by which a right to favour and forgiveness is conveyed to him, that is put into his hand. Man is not only permitted to put up a prayer for these blessings; but he is empowered to put up a plea for them. He can appeal for them to the truth and the righteousness, as well as to the mercy of God—so that God is faithful and just in forgiving his sins—God is just while the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

We know that the doctrine of justification by faith, has been charged with an injurious effect on the moral character of him who embraces it; and were the present the place for it, we would willingly consent to try it by this, as a touchstone of its worth. But in the meantime we may remark, that acquiescence in this doctrine is the far more legitimate fruit of a lofty than of a low conception of virtue. He who stands on the level of human attainment, and thinks of the law that he has not only reached but exceeded its acquirements, will look down upon it as exhibiting a humbler pattern of excellence than he himself has realised; and, in his bosom, will there be the elated feeling that in his own strength he is more than conqueror. He again who looks on the level of actual character as being on the same even platform with the commandment of God, will feel at least that he has gained his object; and neither will he seek to be justified by faith. It is the man who stands on this level and thinks so sublimely of the law, that, in order to survey it aright, he has to cast his upward eye to a light that is inaccessible—it is he

who carries in his mind the purest and the worthiest imagination of moral rectitude—it is he whose view of the standard of duty is the most exalted, and whose desires after the fulfilment of it are the most earnest and aspiring—he it is, who, humbled under a sense of transgression, will be most ready to admit the need of another righteousness than his own. Strange, if a belief, which originates in a high sense of virtue, should issue at length in the subversion of its practice. But whether righteousness of life be the product of this doctrine or not, we do well to remember, that a true conception of righteousness, in all its extent, and in all its elevation, is the likeliest principle for urging us onwards to the adoption of such a doctrine; and, amid all the aspersions it has gotten, as being hostile to the cause of morality—let us not forget, that he bids fairest to be a disciple of faith, who has the keenest perception of morality, and he who yields her the profoundest reverence.

And we know nothing that flashes with more evidence from the Bible, than that to be justified by faith is the authorised way of being justified; and that to seek to establish a righteousness of our own is called by the apostle a stumbling-block; and that to slight the righteousness of Christ is not only to refuse the offer of the Lawgiver, but to aggravate His wrath; and that to attempt a plea of merit for ourselves, instead of coming unto God in that merit which the Saviour hath earned for us, is, in fact, to abandon the patent way, and to attempt the kingdom of heaven by the prosecution of a by-path. Nothing can be more pointedly announced than that Christ is the way, and that there is no other by which a sinner may draw nigh unto God. It is a covered way; and the material by which the covering is formed is the righteousness of Christ, resting by imputation on the head of the believer. Should he try to wrap himself in the merit of his own obedience, he will find it too frail and too scanty a defence against the storm of the coming vengeance; and the only method of turning the fury of God into the favour of God, is to appear before Him in the faith of that righteousness which He Himself hath prepared, with which He was well pleased when rendered to Him by His well-beloved Son, and for the sake of which He is well pleased with all those who put their trust in Him. They are accepted in the beloved. They are justified in the name of Jesus.

Let us no longer therefore forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew out unto ourselves broken cisterns which can contain no water. Let us set ourselves to the work of believing. We know that to believe without evidence is impossible; and that if we could not set you on the path where that evidence is to be met, to bid you believe were a useless and unintelligible prescription. But if our evidence for the word lieth in the word itself—then, plainly, what you have to do, is to give earnest heed unto the testimony. Hearken diligently unto me says the Lord, and your soul shall live. Read diligently the Bible. Bring your mind into frequent contact with what is written in this book; and it will at length evolve itself in its characters, both of importance and of truth, upon your understanding. Go up unto Jerusalem, says Christ, unto His disciples; and there will you be endued with light and power from on high. Jerusalem was the assigned post at which they had to wait then, for such a demonstration; and the Bible is the post to which we must repair now, that we may be visited by the same demonstration. The man who reads, and who prays, and who sends forth his mind to the assurances of the Bible, and who tries to conceive the trueness of them, will at length be met by the evidence of the trueness of them. The trumpet does not blow an uncertain sound, when it calls on you to believe and be saved. Even before the light of conviction has spread its overpowering brilliancy over the truths of Scripture, there is a clear definite intelligible something which an inquirer has to do. He will have ample reason to rejoice after he has found the Lord. But there is a way to find Him. There is a way of seeking Him; and we have a warrant to rejoice at its very outset—for let the heart of them, says the Psalmist, rejoice, *who seek* the Lord. Let it never be said that we are without the means of faith unto life everlasting, when we have the Bible in our hands, and the promise that God will

light His candle in our hearts. The evidence upon which this coming conviction will turn, it is not for us at present particularly to explain. But many is the simple cottager, on whose understanding it has dawned; and he has seen the wisdom and authority of God engraven on the pages of his Bible; and he has recognised His voice in the call which is there lifted up to all the ends of the earth, to look unto Christ and be saved; and he has perceived, that, as there was no exception to the call, he would in fact be thwarting the message altogether, did he make an exception of himself; and, with this warrant for appropriation, he has appropriated the general declarations of the record to his own special and individual behoof; and thus has he entered into life, he has believed in Christ his righteousness, and according to his belief so has it been done unto him.

To encourage you in the work of thus seeking after the kingdom of God and His righteousness, let us assure you, that, from the very first movement of such an undertaking, if honestly embarked in and steadily pursued, you have your well-wishers in heaven. God has no pleasure in your death. It were just another triumph to that process of redemption, which he had made known, did you come in for a share of its benefits. Nothing can exceed the welcome and the good will which lie in that call, from which there is most assuredly no exclusion of you. Even though you were the chief of sinners, it were just a glorifying of the gospel of Christ, that, by your believing it, it became the power of God unto your salvation. He protests that it is not your destruction He wants. It is your deliverance, take His word for it, that he longs after. And now that that deliverance is rendered possible, do we see the Creator actually courting his creatures to reconciliation. For the deliverance might have been impossible. In the same sense in which it is said of God that He cannot lie, might it have been said that God cannot take sinners into acceptance. They must be vested with a righteousness, ere the all-righteous God can admit them in peace and favour to his presence. Here lay a difficulty, not merely affirmed to be so in the schools of Theology, but actually and substantially felt to be so in the counsels of Heaven—not merely standing, till it was done away, an unresolved puzzle in the theory of jurisprudence; but standing, till it was done away, an impenetrable barrier of separation between God and the guilty. But now that a righteousness has been provided, this wall of partition has been removed; and there is nothing but the most affectionate urgency on the part of God, that man should walk through the intervening space which has thus been opened for him. The proposal is, that the sin of his own person should be transferred to the person of another, and the righteousness of that other should be transferred to him. These are the plain but weighty terms of a message, which is destined to charm our world into confidence and spiritual life. Whoever shall think of the proposal that it is a fiction, and a mockery,—he, for himself, shuts the door against it; and on him it cannot be realised. He who believes it an honest proposal shall actually find it so. This faith opens an inlet, through which the righteousness of Christ reaches his person, and becomes attached to it by imputation. He staggers not at the promise of God because of unbelief. He counts Him to be faithful who has promised; and God, counting this to him for righteousness—by faith he is justified.

We now proceed, in the third place, to offer our remarks on the connection between faith and peace.

To illustrate this connection, little, we apprehend, need be said in the explanation of these two terms. If I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings, I have faith in the Bible; or I have faith in the Author of the Bible. If I believe any testimony to be true, I have faith either in the subject of the testimony, or in the author of it. If I believe a doctrine to be true, I may be either said to believe in the doctrine, or to believe in him who proposes it. I believe all that I find in the Scriptures to be true, or I have faith in the Scriptures. One of the things I find there, is, that the whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and thus for me to believe in Scripture is to believe in God. He sent His written message to the world; but He employed

a messenger even Jesus Christ, and I believe also in Christ if I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings.

There are two ways in which the phrase peace with God may be understood. It may signify that the real hostility which subsisted between the two parties is now at an end; and, in particular, that God, the alone party who can turn his purposes of hostility into execution, has now ceased to be the enemy of man and has become his friend. It may denote that the wrath of God towards man is appeased, and that the former is now willing and actually will bestow friendship and forgiveness upon the latter. Now it is conceivable, that this may be the real state of matters between God and man, and yet man be ignorant that it is so. God may have become his friend—and yet he remain for some time in dread of God as an enemy. After a negotiation for peace has terminated in the accomplishment of it between two countries, it may take months before an inhabitant of one of these countries comes to know this. There may be a real peace between the countries, while, in his bosom, there is all the restlessness and discomfort of a yet unappeased terror. Now the same of God. It is certainly conceivable that He may have ceased from His purposes of vengeance upon man, before that man comes to know this—so that there may be a real peace between the two parties, while, in the bosom of one, there may still be the turbid apprehension of God as a judge and God as avenger. And this suggests a second sense in which the term peace may be understood—even that peace which arises in a man's bosom, when he ceases from those painful apprehensions of God's displeasure, which formerly disturbed him. The one denotes the change which has taken place in the external relation between the parties. The other denotes the change which has taken place in the mind of one of them, when he comes to have a view of the new relation into which he has been translated. Peace in the one way, denotes the event of reconciliation on the part of God towards man. Peace in the other way, denotes the calm which enters into the heart of man, when he is visited by a sense of reconciliation.

Now there can be no difficulty in perceiving why peace in the first sense of the term, should stand connected with faith. This connection is a matter of God's own appointment. He hath so willed it, that if man shall believe in the message which He hath sent, He shall cease to view man as an object of condemnation. He hath devised a scheme of mercy for sinners; and it hath pleased Him, that every sinner, who shall give Him credit for all he says about the plan and about the execution of it and so confides in its efficacy, shall also experience its efficacy. It may perhaps be altogether arbitrary on the part of God, thus to single out faith as the qualifying circumstance on the part of man through which God becomes pacified towards him. Be it so. It could not be in the hand of a more wise and righteous arbitrator; and were this the place for it, we, narrow and darkened as we are in our every view of the high matters of eternity, might still trace in the rule of proceeding the lineaments of wisdom and of rectitude. And if he can see reason, why God should cease from His anger towards the man who confides in His declarations of good will, and of the plan by which He has carried it into accomplishment; and so should make the specific salvation of every individual, to turn on his possession of faith—still more may we discern a reason and a propriety, why God should now be so far reconciled to man in general, as to hold out salvation to all and propose to the world at large the overtures of reconciliation. There is now made out in behalf of the whole species a capacity of salvation; and this capacity becomes an actual accomplishment, in behalf of every one son and daughter of the species who believes. He who has the faith is justified. He who wants the faith has the wrath of God abiding on him. Whosoever hath the faith is justified, and should all have the faith all would be justified. The friendship of God is actually conferred on those who believe. This friendship is put within the reach of all, who have within their reach the means of believing—the record of the sayings which are to be believed—the evidence, which all who will to do the will of God, may, upon their honest attention, actually find in

that record; and upon which they obtain the faith that is unto salvation. There must be a reason why the benefits of the gospel, should have this special direction impressed upon them. There must be the uttermost wisdom, on the part of God, in selecting this as the condition on which the actual salvation of man turns in every particular case. But there is a still more evident reason, why now there should be such a disposition on the part of God towards man, that salvation is largely and universally offered to him—that, whether he accepts or not, the invitation is now given, and may be carried round the globe without exception and without partiality—that a message of peace may now be carried to every door, and the bearer of the message be only acting in the spirit of his warranted commission, when he urges and entreats every man he meets with to entertain it—that this embassy from heaven may be made to traverse the face of our earth in every conceivable direction, and hold forth its free and generous proposals in every spot of ground on which is reared a human habitation. There must be a reason why these proposals should be restricted, in their effect and in their accomplishment, only to those who give credit to the embassy. But what is the cause that there should have been such an embassy at all?—that this world of sinners should have been so kindly and so generously dealt with?—that God, sitting on a throne of judgment, of which the stability must be upheld, should thus send forth the overtures of a free and willing acceptance over the whole extent of a guilty creation?—that He who cannot lie, and who therefore seemed by the utterance of His threats and proclamations, to put peace with His rebellious creatures at an irrecoverable distance from Him, by laying upon it the burden of an impossibility which He Himself had framed—that still the movement towards this peace should proceed from the holy and inflexible God; and so patent a way to reconciliation be devised by Him, that all who will may have life, and all who have the belief, which no man can refuse to have without the violation of a moral principle, might be restored to terms of friendship with their offended Lawgiver?—How comes it that He should be so pacified towards those who have trampled his law under foot, that all its sanctions are withheld from execution, and the threatened punishment is turned into the proclaimed and the offered reward? How comes it that every obstacle which formerly existed in the Divine bosom, should be now so marvellously cleared away?—that now there should be no barrier of separation with God?—that He, without let or hindrance should now send forth so wide a call of reconciliation?—and that the contempt of man who will not listen, the incredulity of man who will not believe, form now the only resistance which it has to struggle with?

This change then in the feeling of the Divine mind towards sinners, is through Jesus Christ our Lord. The souls of those who believe in Him, are given to Him as a reward for His services. The peace which God has entered into with sinners, is through Christ their peace offering; and the very love which the Father bears to the Son, is among the number of its guarantees. It is not saying all that might be said for the strength and the sureness of God's pacific disposition towards us, when we say that His truth and justice have now been magnified on the person of the Redeemer, and that mercy is now free to follow the workings of its own kind and generous instigations. It is for the honour of Christ, as well as for the happiness of man—it is for the glory and the success of His great undertaking—it is for the furtherance of that cause, upon the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set—it is giving Him in fact of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied that all who have faith in His name should have salvation by His merits. God, in holding out the right hand of reconciliation towards the guilty, is in fact rendering to His own righteous servant, to the elect in whom His soul delighteth, the reward of finished and accepted services. And from that tender but deeply mysterious prayer of the Saviour—"that all who believe in me shall be one, even as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in thee and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"—from this prayer, may we gather how firm is his

security, and how intimate is his union with the Godhead, who hath fellowship, not with the Father only, but with the Father and the Son.

But there is not merely a connection between the faith of the sinner and the cessation of God's enmity against him, which is the first sense that we have given to the term peace. There is also a connection between the faith of the sinner and a sensation of peace, which thereupon enters into the sinner's bosom. He obtains peace and joy in believing. Before he had faith, and if he saw his danger aright, he was in a state of disquietude. After he has faith, and if he see aright his new relation with God he will be delivered from this state. This process however, let it be observed, has been actually experienced by many who could not perhaps describe the steps of the process to others; and to whom also it may be altogether unnecessary, that another should offer any description to them. In attempting the explanation of this process, we are sensible that we attempt a task of as difficult management on the part of the speaker, and requiring as patient and sustained an attention on the part of the hearers, as any that we have yet entered upon. It is at the same time an explanation, the metaphysical understanding of which is not essential to him, who, under the guidance of the Spirit, is made both to abound in faith and taste of peace as the fruit of His operation. But still it may help to evince to those who are without, the rationality of Christian experience; and it may even help, not only to comfort and confirm those who are within, it may also help them the more effectually to fulfil the precept of the apostle, "be able to render unto every one a reason of the hope that is in you."

And here let us observe, by the way, that the meaning of words is often darkened by the definitions which are offered of them. There is a light and a simplicity in many a subject, that is sometimes in danger of being buried under a parade of explanation. And we do confess, that it is with some degree of fearfulness we enter upon a topic, which involves in it some of the nicest and most interesting points of theological argument.

But on the other hand, we would have you to understand, that there may be a diseased and exclusive appetite on your part, for such views as force an easy and immediate conviction on the mind of the observer—such views as can be got at without any painful, difficult or laborious ascent, by the steps of a lengthened investigation—such views as, without the fatigue of a sustained attention, might flash a cheering and a satisfying light upon you by their own brilliancy; and while you are sitting in the posture of indolent spectators rather than of attentive hearers, minister some such cheap enjoyment, as the pictures of a moving panorama, on which the characters of fidelity and loveliness and grandeur stand palpably engraven. There is no doubt a pleasure, and a very exquisite one too, when, from a commanding eminence, we gain the wide and the magnificent survey of some rich domain of speculation. But it is a pleasure that must be purchased by toil. We must climb the eminence; and it is really expecting too much from the leader of such an intellectual expedition, that he has both to force his own way, and to sustain the weight of a whole multitude, who would like to be dragged, without effort on their part, to the summit along with him. You must contribute your own strength in this undertaking. You should yield the strenuous co-operation of your own attention to it. He cannot possibly carry you to all the interesting points of survey, without having to cross at times the uninviting wild, or to force the steep and the winding path of some arduous elevation. It is not possible, nor would it be right, to strew the whole of such a path with blossoms, or to irradiate the whole of it by the glow of a rich and attractive colouring. And you are positively in the wrong, if you look for delicacies on every step in the way of instruction. It bespeaks you to be children, and not men—the possessors of a superficial, rather than of a strong and hardy understanding,—if, ever on the edge after such luxuries as regale your taste for poetry, or your taste for pathos, you sink down into disappointed listlessness, when truth offers herself to your notice with no other recommendation than her own worth, and in no other

garb than her own sober and unwrought livery.

For the minister to lend himself to such an appetite as this, is, in the first place, to prostitute the pulpit into a stage; and for the people to be under its dominion, is, not merely to indicate how low is the place they occupy in the scale of intellect, but how utterly destitute and degraded is their place in the scale of Christianity. There is no practical conviction of sin, when the taste to which we have now referred, is the clamorous and predominant one. There is no earnest seeking after salvation, if he who is its messenger, must, to be heard with patience, shed a frivolous and a passing splendour over the way everlasting. We know not, if you have ever tried to compute the guilt which may be incurred by each of the parties in such a worthless and wretched ministration. Let us flee from it, as we would from that coming wrath, which must be in reserve for those, who could thus trifle with eternity, and spoil the doctrine of the cross of all that effect, which, in its own unaccompanied simplicity belongs to it. Put the dangerous propensity in question under the severest castigation. Let the weight and the value of truth, ever predominate in your esteem over those attractions, which, while they fascinate, may also most wofully mislead their tasteful and impassioned admirer. You never will reach the solid attainments of an intelligent and well founded Christianity, if truth, and truth alone, have not power, though stript of all the embellishments and all the graces, to compel you around her, and bend your willing ear to her plain and grave and weighty announcements. This is the habit to which we should like to train you; and a habit to which we have our suspicions that some of you need to be trained. What we want to summon to the bar of instruction, is neither your taste, nor your feeling, nor your imagination. We want to summon your attention. Our exactions are upon this single faculty; and what we demand is its patient and prolonged waiting on a deliverance, which, however prosaic in its terms, is pregnant in its truths with matter, just as important in point of value as an existence of blessedness, and just as lasting in point of effect as are your unperishable natures. What we are feebly attempting to deal around us, is the very essence of that truth which is unto salvation; and, in the words of the Bible, we call upon you to stir yourselves up that you may lay hold of it; and that your souls may live we call upon you, not merely to hearken, but to hearken diligently.

It will perhaps aid you to understand how you should come to have peace, when you come to have a belief that the sayings of the Bible are true sayings—could you conceive one whom you believe to be a divine messenger, and calling himself if you will the Son of God, to approach any one of yourselves, and enter personally and individually into conversation with you. You are still, we suppose, under the feeling that there is not yet a settlement of the controversy between God and yourself as a sinner; and that His Son comes to your door as a bearer of good tidings, as a setter forth of the way of peace and reconciliation. The question is, what are the sayings which we may conceive to be uttered on such an occasion—and how do they operate in communicating peace of mind to him who believes on them?

Did this messenger of God tell me, that he comes as the bearer of a sure and absolute salvation to me and to every one, and that all should in point of fact go to heaven when they die—we need to offer no explanation of the way in which peace would enter the heart, at the very moment in which the belief of such an announcement entered the understanding. It is not even necessary to conceive, that this communication should be personally directed to me by the mouth of a present and a living messenger. If there be faith, the effect in bringing peace to me is quite the same, whether I be told in this way of my own particular salvation, or whether I read in the Bible that all men immediately after death are to be translated into a blissful eternity. The belief of this saying would necessarily involve in it the belief, that I, as being a man, as being included in the general description of all men, had a sure part in that inheritance which fadeth not away. Were such one of the sayings of the

Bible, then it follows directly from the import of it, that all who did believe in the sayings of the Bible would have peace.

It is unnecessary to observe, that no such intimation occurs in the written record we have of God's message to us; and that therefore the supposition of it serves no other purpose than that of illustration.

But again, did this messenger state to me in oral conference, not that all should be saved, but that only some should be saved; and that a book of life was kept in heaven; and that therein were kept the names of all to whom God had ordained a place in heaven: And did he further tell me, that my name was written there, then if I believed in his saying, would I be assured of the prospect of blessedness that lay before me, and this also would be an assurance of peace. Or, to shift our supposition from a messenger to a Bible, if, in that Bible my name and my locality and my circumstances and the period of the world at which I lived were so specified, as completely to identify my person; and it were said of this person that he was of the number who were recorded in the book of life—then also would a belief in the sayings of the Bible, carry me, by an immediate transition, to the peace I am in quest of. But in truth, there is no such revelation there. There is not one individual of our species to whom the Bible attaches such a specific mark of his personal and particular safety as this. The Bible deals in generalities; and, if he is ever to have peace and joy in believing, he must gather it out of these generalities; and they must be constructed in some such way, as to have the effect they would have had, had they looked particularly towards him, and had they carried in them so pointed a direction to himself, that, on their basis, he can trust in having God for his own friend, and an eternal dwelling place with God for his own inheritance.

It is true that the Bible does tell us something of the book of life. It tells us that the names of all who after death are to be translated into the realms of everlasting security are written there. It tells us that there are names, but it does not tell us which names. Here then is an example, in which it would be possible to have faith without having peace. Did a messenger from God just tell me thus much—just tell me that some were to be saved, and that there was a list of them in heaven, but forbear to satisfy my painful desire of knowing whether my name had been inserted in the list, I might perceive in all this a chance of salvation; but the uncertainty of it would continue to adhere to me on this side of death. I might thoroughly believe his announcement as far as it goes; and yet not be at rest. Or if, instead of being an intimation to me from a living messenger, it were an intimation of the Bible to all the readers of this book; and were it the only intimation from which we were left to gather hope to ourselves, all men might have faith and yet no man have peace. I cannot ascend to heaven while in the body, and there examine the contents of the book of my destiny. This mighty secret lies in a book that is far off, and to me inaccessible; and thus might I have entire faith in all the sayings of the word that is nigh, and yet live out the whole of my time in the world in a state of fearful agitation.

But again, let the messenger talk with me, and inform me that though that salvation, the tidings of which he bore, would only be realised by a particular number of the species—yet he had a more satisfying indication to offer than the mere circumstance of their enrolment in a record that was invisible, and that all who were so destined had a visible mark each on his own forehead. I may have faith in this announcement too; and could I only ascertain by self-inspection the existence of the mark in question, I would no sooner have the faith than I would have the peace along with it. But had I no such mark, then my faith, instead of being the harbinger of my peace, would be to me the harbinger of despair. So that if, instead of being the statement of a messenger it were the statement of a Bible, all men might believe in it, and yet only those men be at peace who were in possession of the mark—while the others who had equal faith, but were destitute of the mark, would be reduced by their faith to a state of utter despondency.

Were the first then the only announcement in the Bible respecting the future

condition of man, viz., that forgiveness and favour were granted to all without exception—all who had faith would have peace. Were the second the only announcement, viz., that there were favour and forgiveness for a particular number whose names were written in a book that was inaccessible, all might have faith and yet none have peace. Were the third the announcement, viz., that favour and forgiveness were only to those who were in possession of a certain palpable mark upon their foreheads that could be instantly ascertained, all men might have faith—both those who had the mark and those who wanted it; and yet this faith would bring despair to the latter, and peace only to the former. Settled peace would only be the portion of the one class and as settled despair the portion of the other class.

Let us now suppose, that the mark in question, instead of being of so palpable and so discoverable a sort as a visible impression on the forehead, lay deeper and more difficult of access within the recesses perhaps of a man's mind and a man's character. In this case, there might be no peace till the mark was ascertained; and the peace might be long of coming, if it came as the result of an anxious and laborious examination. If the mark be not such as to obtrude itself upon the discernment at a single glance, this might delay the attainment of the peace after which we are aspiring. It may be easy to perceive by the organ of the eye, that which is situated without us. It is not so easy, in general to perceive by the organ of consciousness, that which is situated within us—to make a survey of all the objects which lie in the hidden province that comes under the recognition of this faculty; and there to take account of such a desire, or such an affection, or such a principle, as that, on the assured possession of it, we may be assured of a destiny of bliss being in reserve for us.

Now in none of these ways have we yet unfolded, either what the chief and at the same time most comprehensive saying of the Bible is upon this matter, or how the peace of a sinner's mind stands connected with the act of his believing it. The Bible does not proclaim absolute forgiveness and felicity to all men—so that the transition from faith to peace is not just so direct and obvious, as under the first supposition. It does proclaim this for a particular number; and it tells us also that their names are written in the book of life, though it no where specifies the names—so that as under the second supposition, were there no other announcement on the subject, all might believe and yet all might remain in a state of disquietude. And it also assigns marks by which the children of the kingdom might be distinguished even in this life—though these marks be not generally of so palpable a sort, as that they can be seized with the same promptness and facility, with which the eye is arrested by something externally and immediately visible. And therefore to come at the thorough assurance of having such marks—it might be necessary to institute a lengthened and laborious process of self-examination. And here the circumstance which offers itself, in proof that we have not yet by any of our suppositions got into a precise accordancy with the Bible, is, that, under none of them have we yet assigned such sayings as have precisely the same influence with the Bible in pacifying a sinner's bosom. In none of them would belief have the same effect upon peace, that a belief of Scripture has. For while, on the one hand, there are marks specified in the Bible, by which the children of the kingdom are distinguished from the children of this world—there are, on the other hand, sayings in the Bible, the belief of which, antecedent to all self-examination, brings an instantaneous peace and joy along with them. There are tidings which are there called tidings of great joy; and when is it, one would think, that the joy should be felt but just when the tidings are believed? They positively would not deserve the name of glad tidings, unless they gladdened our hearts at the moment of our putting faith in them; and, accordingly, we read, both of the first and of the latter Christians in all ages, how often their peace came immediately in the train of their faith—how they had peace and joy in believing—how as soon as the word of the testimony dawned with credit upon their understanding, so soon did it prove itself a peace-speaking testimony, and that by a tranquillizing influence which it brought at the very

moment into their hearts—So that there must be a something in the communications of this book, which, if rightly understood, must, when believed, bring peace immediately along with it. And yet in this very book we are called upon to prove ourselves, and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and to take heed lest we fall, and to labour that we may obtain full assurance, and to count not that we have yet attained. And while, on the one hand, the first converts did at the very outset receive the word with gladness—they, on the other hand, were taught to look upon their salvation as a point at issue, as a matter in dependence, as the reward of a race that had yet to be run, as the prize of a victorious contest that had not yet been carried to its termination: And thus, while the peace of God ruled in their hearts, their prospect of eternal life did not lie before them in such full characters of certainty, but that it admitted of being brightened into a still more cheering hope, and confirmed into a still higher and more steadfast degree of assurance.

So that there is both a peace felt by the believer, when he looks to the truth that is without him in the Bible; and yet that Bible refers his attention to a mark that is within him upon his own heart. The word and the testimony of Christ, at the first drop peace upon him. Marks which by the work of Christ are impressed on the believer's person, afterwards reflect peace upon him. There is peace at the outset, if he believe what he is told about salvation; and yet it is a peace which admits of being confirmed afterwards—just as if his salvation were still a matter of doubt and a matter of dependence. There is something peculiar surely in the sayings of the Bible, about this whole matter of a sinner's hopes—a something which distinguishes the whole sum of these sayings, from any of the single suppositions that we have yet come forward with—a something which brings to one these apparent inconsistencies, and turns that which looks a foolishness and a mystery to the eye of the world to be indeed the wisdom of God for the world's salvation.

Were we called upon then to assign the most compendious, and at the same time the most frequently reiterated saying of the Bible about the salvation of man, we would fix upon that statement of constant occurrence in its pages, that it is he who believeth that shall be saved. It is like as if the messenger whom we have already quoted, should come to my door and offer salvation to me simply upon my giving credit to him. It is not an absolute offer of salvation as under the first supposition. It is not the bare announcement of a chance for salvation, which could never be ascertained on this side of death, because the certainty of it was only recorded in a book of names that was inaccessible. It is not the assurance of salvation to me, on the possession of a mark that stands visibly engraven on my forehead, which if I have, I in my belief of such a message shall have peace; and, if I have not, I shall on the very same belief be plunged into despair. Neither is it such an assurance of salvation or any other more latent mark, as to make me feel that the first thing I have to do is to look inwardly upon myself, and there institute a metaphysical search into the arcana of my heart and of my character. The intimation is that if I believe I shall be saved. The peculiarity lieth here, that the messenger makes my salvation to turn upon my faith in his statements—makes it to turn on possession of a personal attribute certainly, or if you will a personal mark—such a mark as has its residence within me, and to find and ascertain the existence or which I must look inwardly; but at the same time such a mark, as neither I nor any man can possibly acquire, but by first looking outwardly. I cannot believe in any affirmation, till I have looked to the matter of that affirmation. I cannot have faith in the statements of the messenger till I have considered his statements. It is true that to believe is a personal act; but it is the act of a mind sending itself forth, and busying itself among the things to be believed. It is true that faith, just like affection, or principle, or desire is a personal accomplishment. But it is an accomplishment stamped upon my person, by an influence emanating from that which is without; and it is by the direction of my mental eye to the object without, that I keep the avenue open for the transmission of this influence. Though it be on the posses-

sion of a personal accomplishment—though it be on myself that faith hath its standing-place, and it be on the possession of faith in the statements of a messenger calling himself divine that my salvation is made to turn—it were altogether preposterous on that account, to look first away from the statements with the view of looking inwardly and downwardly upon myself. It were just as preposterous, as if some benefit were to accrue on my obtaining a sight of the sun in the firmament, I should, instead of looking outwardly toward him, endeavour to search for the image that he has impressed of himself upon the retina of my eye. Was it upon some other speciality of my understanding or of my character than faith, that the Bible made my eternal felicity to hang—I should instantly have felt myself committed to a process of self-examination. I should have looked inwardly upon myself. But when it comes forth with the primary declaration, that we are saved by faith in its own statements—this draws the attention of the mind to those statements, and we are led to look outwardly upon our Bibles. The only conceivable way in which we can obtain a belief of any truth, is by turning the eye of the mind towards the truth and its accompanying evidence. So that the truths of the Bible are among the first things with which a seeker after God, who is in the direct way of salvation, feels himself engaged. Were he bidden look to some external object so that he may obtain the sight of it and be saved, the eye of his body would be directed towards that object and not towards his own person. And were he bidden give earnest heed to the word of God's testimony so that he may obtain the belief of it and be saved, would the eye of his mind be directed towards the things contained in this book. It is there repeatedly said that faith is competent to the entire salvation of every one who possesses it. If there ever should then be any other marks insisted on, these must be subordinate to faith—for faith, if competent to salvation, must be competent to the formation upon the person of every such mark as is indispensable to salvation. So that in every view of it, believing comes upon us with all the urgency of the first matter on hand. The great, and what ought to be the felt concern of every one of us, is how to attain the faith; and, for this purpose there is not a more likely or suitable attitude of the mind than an earnest contemplation of the objects of faith.

In endeavouring to trace the connection between faith and peace, let us remark, that, had the saying to be believed been that our salvation turned on our possession of some personal property distinct from faith and independent of it—then if we believed this saying, would we have gone instantly in search of this property, and explored the map of our own persons. But when the personal property which is unto salvation is just the very faith itself, then our possession of it may be indicated in two ways—either by the liveliness of its own exercise, or by the existence of other personal marks which it works upon the character by its own influence and operation. In both these cases, the connection between faith and peace is brought about, by our being made conscious that we have faith—conscious that we have that within us or about us which ensures salvation. But still if faith be only known by its exercises, it must be in exercise before we are conscious of it—or if it can be only known by its fruits, it must have had enough of time and enough of operation to produce these fruits, ere we can infer the existence of it. So that ere peace can be derived from the consciousness that we have faith—faith is in actual operation; the mind is in contact with the truths of the Bible; the inquirer is exploring the map of revelation; he is contemplating objects that are without him, and he believes their reality. He must look outwardly, before, through the medium of consciousness, he can gather any peace in connection with faith by looking inwardly.

What we affirm is, that such are the truths of the Christian revelation, that, the single act of looking outwardly upon them, there is a peace which enters into the looker's mind along with his faith. There is a peace in the bare exercise of believing. The truths themselves are fitted to convey peace into the heart, the very moment that they are recognised to be truths. Even were it possible to believe without the consciousness of believing, such are the intimations of

gospel, that a single perception of the trueness of them (a single reliance upon the faithfulness of these intimations) is enough of itself to send a tranquillizing influence into the sinner's bosom. Consciousness may afterwards suggest to me that I am a believer. The faith which has taken possession of my mind, may there work the influences upon my heart and character which are ascribed to this principle in the New Testament; and, from the fruit of these influences may I gather the existence within me of the real faith of the New Testament. I may then couple this discovery with the assurance, that the privileges of the gospel are unto all and upon all who believe; and may thus come at peace through the medium of a process of self-reflection and self-examination. This is a possible—nay this is a legitimate—nay this is a prescribed exercise with every disciple of Christ. But still the peace which is thus come at, is but the confirmation of a peace which is already arrived at previously. It is not then that peace makes its first entrance into the heart—nor is it the introduction of a new feeling which takes place at this time; but only the ratification and the establishment of an old feeling. There was a peace conceived in the sinner's heart, along with the delivery of the message of the gospel, so soon as that message was understood in the terms of it and discerned in the trueness of it; and, just as upon the utterance of any other good news, a joy will be felt at the moment of their utterance barely upon their being believed and though there be no reflex consciousness of believing—so were the good news of the gospel fitted in the days of the apostles, and are they fitted still, to send an instantaneous peace into the bosom, and that solely on the perception that we have of its being a true and a creditable message.

For should the bearer of such a message come to my door, and tell me, that God carries to me individually such a good will in His heart as to have no pleasure whatever in my death—what else can it require than a simple faith in such a statement, to be gladdened and tranquillized by it? Or should he call himself an ambassador from God, and say that by his mouth God beseeches me to be reconciled—will there no peace and joy flow direct from my faith in this communication? We want not to embarrass you by the metaphysics of any unseen and inward principle whatever. But should a powerful and offended neighbour, send his own son to me with the intelligence, that he has now obtained by the hands of an interposing friend an ample satisfaction for all the wrongs I ever inflicted on him, and is now ready to take me into friendship—is there any thing metaphysical or embarrassing in our discernment of that process, by which a simple feeling of deliverance from fear will come immediately in the train of a simple belief in this intelligence. And sinner as I am, deeply as I have revolted against the Lawgiver in heaven, inflexible as His justice is and awful as is the power of His anger—I only need to be told that God is pacified by the blood of an all sufficient propitiation, and to believe in what I am told that I may be pacified from my fears of the coming vengeance. Let me only believe what I am told of the Son of God, and I will no longer be afraid. Let me know it to be a truth, that my salvation is an object which His heart is set upon—that He bore the pains of death, in order to accomplish it—that from the place of glory where He now sits, He casts a longing regard towards me, and that every look and every wish which I heave towards Him is met by the merciful High Priest of the human race, with a responding welcome—that He is able, and just as willing as He is able to save to the uttermost—that He knocks at the door of my heart, and that all which He wants and is honestly desirous of there, is to be admitted into confidence—that He offers me the redemption which He hath achieved for many, and not only backs the offer with the invitation of His Father but with the commandment of His Father that I should accept of it—Let me only conceive that these are so many steps of an authentic transaction in behalf of the world, and in behalf of me as one of the world's inhabitatants; and there is not the distance of a single link, between my belief in all this, and the peace of deliverance the peace of joy the peace of expectation which emerges from it.

SERMON XXIX.

On the Analogies which obtain between the Natural and the Spiritual Husbandry.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—MARK iv. 26—29.

A MAN may be qualified for practically carrying forward a process, of whose hidden steps, and of whose internal workings, he is most profoundly ignorant. This is true in manufactures. It is true in the business of agriculture. And it holds eminently true in the business of education. How many are the efficient artisans, for example, in whose hands you may at all times count on a right and prosperous result; but who are utterly in the dark, as to the principles of that chemistry in their respective arts, by the operation of which the result is arrived at. And how many a ploughman, who knows best how to prepare the ground, and who knows best how to deposit the seed for the object of a coming harvest; and yet, if questioned upon the arcana of physiology, or of those secret and intermediate changes by which the grain in the progress of vegetable growth is transformed into a complete plant ripened and ready for the use of man, would reply in the language of my text, that he knoweth not how. And in like manner, there is many a vigorous and successful educationist, who does come at the result of good scholarship, whether in Christianity or in common learning—and that without ever theorizing on the latent and elementary principles of the subject, upon which he operates—without so much as casting one glance at the science of metaphysics, a science more inscrutable still than that of physiology; and which, by probing into the mysteries of the human spirit, would fain discover how it is that a truth is first deposited there by communication, and then takes root in the memory, and then warms into an impression, and then forms into a sentiment, and then ripens into a purpose, and then comes out to visible observation in an effect or a deed or a habit of actual performance. There are thousands, who, in the language of our text, know not how all this comes about; and yet have in point of fact and of real business, set the process effectively agoing. We are not sure indeed if our mental philosophers have done much, or if they have done any thing to guide or to enlighten the methods of practical education; and for this, we should certainly have less confidence in the philosophy of those speculative men who can expatiate on man's internal constitution, and talk of associations and remembrances and laws of primary or secondary suggestion—than we should have in the home-bred sagacity of those operative men, who have put forth their hand to the employment, and laboured for years in the business of schools or of parishes.

The phrase of the "kingdom of Heaven" in our parable, possesses the same significancy, which it has in those passages where it is said, that the "kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation" and "the kingdom of Heaven is within you." The kingdom of Heaven, in all these places, meaneth the reign of Heaven's principles over the heart of man. Let the word of God be addressed to him, and come home to his heart with a deep sense of its truth and obligation—this is the good seed taking firm root in it. Let his faith in the word be genuine, and have its genuine effect on his character and walk—this is the good seed yielding in abundance the fruit of righteousness. And thus it is, that, while in one parable, a teacher of the word is compared to a sower—in the parable before us, its train of influences upon the taught is compared to a process of vegetation.

We cannot afford, at present, to trace all the analogies, which obtain between a plant from the germination of its seed, and a Christian from the infancy of his first principles. We shall in the first place confine ourselves to one or two of these analogies; and secondly endeavour to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of having a certain measure of light thrown upon them, by the comparison which is laid before us in this parable, between the work of a teacher and the work of a husbandman.

First then, in the agricultural process, there is much that is left to be done by Nature, and in a way that the workman knoweth not how; nor is it at all necessary that he should. He puts forth his hand, and sets a mechanism agoing—the principles of which, he, with his head, is wholly unable to comprehend. The doing of his part is indispensable, but his knowledge of the way in which Nature doeth her part is not indispensable. And accordingly, after he hath sown, he may go to sleep if he chooses. He hath done the palpable work, and he wisely meddles not with the profound speculation. The casting of the seed into the ground was his concern. The bringing forth of the fruit was what the earth did of herself; and by the operation of a physiology which he neither comprehends nor cares for, a harvest produce is given to him as the return of his exertions.

Now it is even so in the work of spiritual husbandry. There is an obvious part of it, that is done by the agency of man; and there is a hidden part of it, which is independent of that agency. The first part may well be done by a man, who is free of all that ambitious curiosity, that might have led him to pry into the mysteries of the second. Were this rightly attended to, it might save both parents and teachers, a deal of misplaced, and even mischievous anxiety. What more settled and reposing than the faith which a husbandman has in the constancy of Nature. He knows not how it is; but, on the strength of a gross and general experience, he knows that so it is. And it were well in a Christian teacher to imitate this confidence. There is in it, both the wisdom of experience, and the sublime wisdom of piety. He plants and he waters, and he goes through all the human work of the spiritual husbandry; and then, he should commit it quietly and confidingly, to Him who giveth the increase. He should not meddle with matters too high for him; and, on the principle of not attempting to be wise beyond the obvious lessons of Scripture or observation, he should cease his inquiries at the right point, and save himself from all the perplexities of restless and ungovernable speculation. There is great comfort in this exercise of faith; and, what is more, we promise it great efficacy. Be steadfast and immoveable, and always abounding in your proper work. God will not be wanting to His. There is no danger, either of the processes of Nature, or the processes of grace being suspended, because we have not been able to lift the veil, which shrouds them from the eye of our intelligence. We have nothing to do, but to make right and conscientious use of the instruments which have been put into our hand; and to rest assured, that, if we labour in the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain.

But again—it is the work of the husbandman to cast the seed into the ground. It is not his work to manufacture the seed. This were wholly above him and beyond him. The seed is provided for him by a higher hand; and all that lies upon him is the practicable task of putting it into the ground, and following his judgment in suiting the various kinds of seed to the various soils and various preparations.

In like manner, to excogitate and to systematize the truths which we are afterwards to deposit in the minds of those who are submitted to our instruction, were a task beyond the faculties of man. These truths, therefore, are provided to his hand. What his eye could not see, nor his ear hear, has been brought within his reach by a communication from heaven; and to him nothing is left, but a simple acquiescence in his Bible, and a faithful exposition of it.

Our writers upon education may have done something. They may have scattered a few superficial elegances over the face of society; and taught the lovely daughters of accomplishment how to walk in gracefulness their little hour, over a paltry and perishable scene. But it is

only in as far as they deal in the truths and lessons of the Bible, that they rear any plants for heaven; or can carry forward a single pupil to the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Ah, how much has this Bible simplified the work of religious education. It leaves me nothing, but to sit like a little child to the lesson that is set before me; and to convey it with simplicity and clearness, to the other children who stand in need of it. We may now give to the wind all our self-formed demonstrations; and for the fatigue and harassment of all former uncertainties, we have nothing to feel but a reposing confidence in the efficacy of the word, and nothing to do but to enter vigorously and without suspicion on the work of depositing it.

And as we have not to manufacture a seed for the operations of our spiritual husbandry—so neither have we to mend it. It is not fit that the wisdom of God, should thus be intermeddled with by the wisdom of man. It is utterly incompetent for us, to throw aside any part of His revealed counsel as matter of unfit or dangerous communication; and it were putting forth a sacrilegious hand, did we offer to purify it, of what we choose to imagine a doubtful and deleterious ingredient. This must be kept back from our pupils, lest it leads to Antinomianism! That other must be kept back too, lest it unsettles their orthodoxy! Why, if we may not come absolutely forward with the Bible and the whole Bible, we are just where we were. If we can do nothing in the way of making a doctrine for ourselves, surely we do worse than nothing when we mutilate or modify the doctrine which has come down to us from heaven. If we are for ever to be qualifying and mending from the fear of consequences, then we are out at sea again, and in as harassing uncertainty as before; and the business of education is left to the waywardness of our gratuitous and ever-varying decisions. There is no other way of helping ourselves out of this difficulty, than just to bind over our whole understanding to our whole Bible. We dispute not the talent and genius of many, who, in the attempt of skilfully adapting the doctrine of Scripture to the mind of the scholar, have only made laborious deviations from the simplicity that is in Christ. But the man who spares himself all their work of ingenuity, or is even incapable of it, is better qualified for the business of religious education than they. He takes up the Bible fearlessly as he finds it. His single aim is to understand it, and to make it understood; and he brings a simple and a sincere mind to a simple exercise.

But again—we do not lose sight of the analogy which there is, between the work of a spiritual and that of a natural husbandman—when, after having affirmed the indispensableness of casting into the ground of the human heart the pure and the simple word, we further affirm the indispensableness and the efficacy of prayer. Even after that, in the business of agriculture, man hath performed his handiwork, by depositing the seed in the earth—he should acknowledge the handiwork of God, in those high and hidden processes, whether of the atmosphere above or of the vegetable kingdom below, which he can neither control nor comprehend. By the work of diligence which he does with his hand, he fulfils man's parts of the operation. By the prayer of dependence which arises from his heart, he does homage and recognition to God's part of it. And we are not to imagine that prayer is without effect, even in the processes of the natural economy. The same God who framed and who organized our great mundane system, has never so left it to the play and the impulses of its own mechanism, as to have resigned even for one moment that mastery over it which belongs to Him; but He knows when to give that mysterious touch, by which He both answers prayer, and disturbs not the harmony of the universe which he has formed. He knows how to make nature subservient to prayer, and that without invading the constancy of any of her visible successions; and though the eye of the most vigilant experimentalist, should never once detect any law or principle of meteorology, to have been traversed by a special interference of the Deity—yet He nevertheless overrules all the changes of that fitful and fluctuating weather, on which all the hopes of the year are suspended; and the prayers of the husbandman for the earlier and the latter rains, for a season that might secure the ripenings of

productive, and a season that might secure the ingatherings of a safe and prosperous harvest, do not rise in vain to that place where sitteth the Guide and the Governor of our world.

But it is in the world of mind, more than in that of matter, that the efficacy of prayer is realised. It is in those processes of the spiritual economy, when the mind of the creature reciprocates with the mind of the eternal Creator; and when the one, all athirst for the supplies of a refreshing and renovating grace, brings down a shower of living water out of the other's inexhaustible fulness. That is the prayer to which the ear of Heaven is more especially open, and which He who sitteth upon its throne most rejoices to meet and to satisfy. It is when man aspires upwards after fellowship with God, and looks and longs for the communication of light and of power from the sanctuary—it is then that God looks with fondest complacency upon man, and lets willingly downward all the treasures of grace upon his soul. He draws near unto those who draw near unto Him. It has been said of prayer, that it moves Him who moves the universe; and it is in the universe of spirit, that this saying has its chief and most emphatic fulfilment—among those busy interchanges, of dependence on the one hand, and good will upon the other, which take place between the great Parent Spirit, and all those derived or subordinate spirits who constitute the members of His immortal family. It is thus that prayer is an organ of such mighty avail, towards the prosperity and the extension of Christ's Church upon earth; and that whether in the shape of a direct supplication for our own souls, or of benevolent intercession for the souls of others—insomuch that the first preachers of the gospel, in the conduct of their spiritual husbandry, though busied to the uttermost in the work of casting the seed, gave an equal and co-ordinate importance to the work of prayer for a blessing thereupon. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

And here a beautiful analogy suggests itself between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which serves to confirm by one illustration more, a doctrine that cannot be too often propounded to the view of Christians. It is said of Elisha, that when he prayed, the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. Now we venture to affirm of all the plenty which was thus brought forth, that not one atom of it was produced, which did not spring up from the seed that was previously in the ground. Of all the stems in that luxuriant vegetation which was given to Elisha's prayers, not one of them we will say grew without a root, but each of them from a root. The crop which was made to cover the fields of Israel, was not a crop without seed, but a crop from seed. Such a miracle might have been wrought, as, without either rain or seed, could have made a boundless fertility to wave all over the land. But this was not the miracle which followed on the intercession of the prophet. It neither dispensed with seed, nor rain; but brought down the one from heaven for the purpose of fructifying the other that lay waiting for it under the earth. For the development of the seed, a descent of rain from the sky was indispensable; but for a produce to come after the rain, the deposition of seed in the ground was alike indispensable. And it is just so in spiritual husbandry. The seed, which is the word of God, cannot bring forth fruit of itself, without the descent of the spirit of God—that living water from above upon the soul. And neither does the Spirit of God cause of itself the fruits of righteousness to grow, in a soul unfurnished with the truths and informations of the Bible. The vegetation of grace in the heart, is brought about by the one operating upon the other—by the spirit giving efficacy and expansion to the word. This view marks, and we think most distinctly, the limit between the agency of God and the agency of man—both what that is which man ought to perform, and what that is which he ought to pray for. The word is the germ, whence proceedeth all spiritual growth; and this must be deposited in the heart, or he shall not be saved. The Spirit is the shower, by which this word, that would else have remained inert and unproductive within him as a dead letter is quickened and

unfolded; and unless the Spirit descend upon his heart, he shall not be saved. The soul that is ripening for heaven, has been compared to a well watered garden. There would be no germination without a watering of grace from the upper sanctuary; but still the germination arises, not from the stones, but from the seeds of the garden—and if no seeds be there, neither showers nor sunshine will avail it. And thus let it never be forgotten, that, in the heart of man, every germination of fruit by the Spirit, is a germination from the truths of the Bible; and that therefore the work of grace in the soul is carried forward, not by perusals of the book alone, neither by prayers for the blessing alone, but by the co-operation of the perusals with the prayers.

We now come to the second thing proposed, which was to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of a certain measure of light being thrown upon them, by the comparison made in this parable, between the work of a Christian teacher and the work of a husbandman.

And first, it may evince to us the efficacy of that Christian teaching, which is sometimes undertaken by men in humble life, and of the most ordinary scholarship. Let them have but understanding enough for the great and obvious simplicities of the Bible, and let them have grace enough for devout and depending prayer; and, on the strength of these two properties, they are both wise unto salvation for themselves, and may become the instruments of winning the souls of others also. We deny not the importance of a far loftier scholarship than theirs for the clergy; and when pleading in behalf of the latter for the union of deep science with the deepest and most devoted sacredness, we cannot fail to be reminded of Paul, who, though the most accomplished of all the apostles in the literature and philosophy of his age, was at the same time the most effective of them all in gaining converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We shall ever prize then a lettered and an intellectual church, whose ministers might sustain the battles of the faith on the field of authorship, or in the high places of society—and yet be the bearers of its glad and gracious embassy to the habitations of the poor. Nevertheless, we deem it a great thing for Christianity, that, among the poor themselves, there are to be had such effective auxiliaries to the cause, by whose means the whole mass might be leavened into a busier and more pervading fermentation; and the message of salvation be speeded with tenfold celerity, through parishes and populations that no minister can possibly overtake. It is well for the families of our land, that the lessons of eternity can fall with effect even from the lips of the cottage patriarch; and it is more especially well for its huge and overcrowded cities, that the piety of Christian mechanics who spend the week in unremitting drudgery, can be made successfully to bear at Sabbath, even on the profligacy and profaneness of a neglected boyhood. We cannot at all sympathize with that lordly intolerance, which would look either with distrust or with disdain upon their labours—which, jealous lest the work of Christian education should thus be vulgarised, would confine the whole religious instruction even of the common people, to regularly trained and regularly constituted functionaries. Were there a sufficient strength and equipment of these, we should the more readily defer to this antipathy; but it is quite palpable, that in every parish, a great deal more can be done for the interest of the gospel, than lies within the achievement of one solitary arm; and that scarcely a town can be named, where, on comparing the little band of ecclesiastics with the hosts which are congregated therein, we do not feel, as if the labourers in so mighty a harvest, must utterly sink before it into the impotency of despair. There is now a general revolt against every species of monopoly, but the monopoly which would engross to itself the business of Christian instruction, and yet leave it undone, is truly the most execrable of all. And the horrors of that scarcity which it entails upon the land are nothing the less, because it is an artificial scarcity; or because the people are stinted in their supplies of the bread of life, not from any want of this precious commodity, but from the want of that free trade which might bear it more quickly and more copiously round among the families. There is a wo denounced upon

those who keep the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and who neither enter themselves nor suffer those who are willing to enter. Be assured that the profligacy of the many in cities will fill up and overflow, unless the piety and Christian principle of the few, be called forth and rightly directed to the object of making head against it. Every available force which can be enlisted in this moral warfare, should be turned to the service of it. The religionist of some narrow street or lane, whom neighbours send for when any of a family is dying—the gifted man of prayer, who, amid the groupe of assembled households, can send forth the unction of his own piety through a chamber crowded by listeners—the respected though humble fellow-citizen, who, in the absence of all the ministers, is called on for the holy services of a funeral day, and does acquit himself with a simple pathos and a power which are felt throughout all the company—the homely artisan, who, obscure in the world's eye, has yet been visited by a light from heaven; and, in love for the souls of those around him, longs and would labour that they shared with him the hope and the happiness which have gladdened his own—These were most efficient helps, in the work of Christianizing the wastes and the wilds of our city heathenism; and that, by a virtue which they have not gotten at any university, and which all our universities cannot give. It is in these powerful instruments, the word of God and prayer, that the secret of their great strength lieth. Theirs is that higher wisdom, which is revealed unto babes—not often to be found in schools of philosophy, and far oftener to be found among the humble and despised of this world—among men whose names are never heard of in our tasteful and enlightened circles—among obscure tradesmen, unlearned in every thing but the simplicity that is in Christ—among uncouth devotees whom the finger of scorn points at; but who have been known to persevere in their labours of love under the scowl of proud and privileged instructors; and to reclaim whole neighbourhoods, by bringing the terrors of the law and the calls of repentance to bear with an all subduing energy upon the vices of their neglected populations.

But this brings us to the last of those analogies between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which we shall at present be able to overtake—an analogy not certainly suggested by the text, but still close enough for the illustration of all which we can now afford to say, in defence of those parochial establishments which have done so much we think, both for the Christianity and the scholarship of our people.

A territorial division of the country into parishes, each of which is assigned to at least one minister as the distinct and definite field of his spiritual cultivation—this we have long thought does for Christianity, what is often done in agriculture by a system of irrigation. You are aware what is meant by this. Its use is for the conveyance and the distribution of water, that indispensable aliment to all vegetation, over the surface of the land. It is thus for example, that, by the establishment of ducts of conveyance, the waters of the Nile are made to overspread the farms of Egypt—the country through which it passes. This irrigation, you will observe, does not supply the water. It only conveys it. It does not bring down the liquid nourishment from heaven. It only spreads it abroad upon the earth. Were there no descent of water from above causing the river to overflow its banks—there is nothing in the irrigation, with its then dry and deserted furrows, which could avail the earth that is below. On the other hand were there no irrigation, many would be the tracts of country, that should have no agriculture and could bring no produce. Let not therefore our dependence on the Spirit lead us to despise the machinery of a territorial establishment; and neither let our confidence in machinery lead us to neglect prayer for the descent of living water from on high.

SERMON XXX.

On the Universality of the Gospel Offer.

"Good-will toward men."—Luke ii. 14.

When you want a friend to shift himself from a worse to a better situation, there are two distinct arguments that might be employed for the attainment of your object. You may either insist upon the evils of his present situation; or you may lay before him an alluring picture of the new situation, you want him to occupy. You may work either upon his fears or upon his hopes; and while by the constitution of some minds, the one argument is more effectual than the other—there are also minds, which need both the arguments to be earnestly and perseveringly urged upon them, ere you can obtain their concurrence in the measure you are aiming at.

Now there is one common situation in which we are all placed; and it is a situation full of insecurity and danger. We trust we may have said enough to do away that delusive peace, which may rest in the fancied accomplishments of their character. One face is more beautiful than another. Yet there is a worm of decay in each and all of them; and the loathsomeness of corruption will at length spread itself over the fairest and the most fascinating of human forms. One mind is more amiable than another—yet each of them carries in it a rooted principle of alienation from God. Under all their variety from the less to the more lovely, this foullest of all moral deformity adheres to them; and thus it may be said of the most amiable men, that, with this point of decisive condemnation about them, they are the children of wrath even as others; and a spiritual law looks hard upon them also, for their habitual violation of its first and greatest requirement; and there is no one power within the whole compass of nature, no one expedient within reach of the situation which by nature they occupy, that can ward off the threatenings of this outraged law. Heaven and earth must pass away, ere a single sanction of God's proclaimed law can fail of its accomplishment. And thus it is, that there are many, and very many, revered by their fellows while they live, and leaving a dear and a much loved remembrance behind them—who remaining in the situation which by nature they occupied, remain in the number of those over whom the second death has full power; and they, even they, with all the passing admiration they get on this side of death, are fast hastening to a corruption more hideous than the grave, and to a misery still more hopeless than ever body of man in the full weight of its dying agonies was doomed to endure.

Now when we lay before you the danger and the helplessness of such a situation—when we tell you, that, forgetful of God as you are by nature, all the lustre of your other accomplishments will not keep Him, in His own language, from tearing you in pieces when there is none to deliver—when we assure you, that, if you continue what nature made you, you continue a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction—when we bid your conscience answer us the question, whether, upon a review of what that is which chiefly engrosses your heart and animates your conduct and forms the ruling object of your most urgent and habitual desires, whether or not you may be said to live without God in the world—when the answer of conscience is, that, in thought and in affection, you are almost constantly away from God; and, while all alive to the impression of other things, you in reference to Him are a most blind and senseless and alienated creature—Then, surely, if the Bible be something more than the mockery of an imposition, and it tell us that all the nations that forget God shall be turned into hell, we, when pressing this upon you, are just endeavouring to alarm you out of your present situation—We are bringing the argu

ment of terror to bear upon you, an argument which we believe to be most effectual with some minds—for it is to its operation that the apostle Jude seems to refer, when he says "some save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."

But there is another situation to which we are called upon to come over; and there is a free passage opened up to it; and when we move from the one situation to the other, we are relieved from the mighty burden of all that misery which originally weighed upon us. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus"—these are the words which give us the delightful assurance, that, while to all who are out of Christ the look of God is a look of severity; to all who are in Him it is a look of kindness—while from the one situation there is a fearful looking for of judgment; from the other there is a rejoicing hope of the glory of God—while in the one there is the helplessness of unaided nature, painfully striving after an obedience which it can never reach; in the other there is a supply of all that strength and spiritual nourishment, which are daily given to the daily prayers of believers—while in the one there is an obstinate forgetfulness of God, because He is shut out at every turn from the eye of the natural mind, still under the dominion of things seen and things temporal; there is in the other, a fond and a habitual recurrence of all our affections to Him. For by the renewing process which all who take the offer of the Gospel are made to undergo, the soul is made alive unto God. Love to Him becomes the aspiring principle of all its endeavours. Instead of that louring and suspicious distance at which we before stood from the God whom we had offended, we draw near with a confiding sense of our reconciliation; and our hearts know what it is to love Him who first loved us. Under the influence of these new principles, we are gradually formed after the image of Him who created us. We are made meet for that communion with Him, which sin had broken up. We are restored to a fitness for His society in heaven, and for all those holy exercises which form the pleasure and the employment of heaven's inhabitants. And surely we have completed the contrast between the two situations, when, for the present darkness and sinfulness and gloomy apprehensions which hang over the one, we lay before you the progressive virtue and the triumphant prospects of the other. And, instead of your fear, we work upon another principle of your constitution, even your hope—when, in our attempts to cheer you forward to that ground which believers occupy, we lay before you their peace with God and progressive holiness here, and the splendours of their unfading immortality hereafter.

But this argument, though differing from the former, is not just the argument of our text. The goodness of the things to which you are invited is one thing. The good-will with which you are invited is another. It is the latter argument which we are at present called upon to address to you. What we offer to your notice is—not the happiness you will enjoy by the acceptance of the gospel call, but the kindness which prompts the call. There is no doubt a mighty effect upon some minds, in the displeasure of God manifested against all who refuse to obey the gospel of His Son; and knowing his terrors, it is our part to make use of them in the business of persuading men. But others again are more drawn by the cords of love; and the tender voice of a beseeching and inviting God, will sometimes soften that heart into acquiesence, which would have remained in shut and shielded obstinacy against all the severity of His threatenings. It is the desire of God after you—it is His compassionate longing to have back again to Himself, those sinful creatures who had wandered away from Him—it is His fatherly earnestness to recall His strayed children—it is this, which, by moving and subduing the will of man, exemplifies the assertion of the apostle when he says—know ye not that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. And thus while Jude says of some in his general epistle, "these save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;" he says of others—"on them have compassion, making a difference."

In the farther prosecution of this discourse, we shall first say a few words on the principle of the gospel message—good-will—Secondly, on the object of the gospel message—men—it is a message

of good-will to men—And thirdly, on the application of the gospel message to the men who now hear us.

When we say that God is actuated by a principle of good-will to you, it sounds in your ears a very simple proposition—easily uttered by the speaker, and as easily apprehended by the hearer. Yes! it is easy enough to reach the mere understanding of the hearer by such an announcement. But it is a work of greater difficulty than many of you have perhaps thought of, to win his confidence in its truth—to shake him out of his suspicions—to open his heart to a sense of God's graciousness, and God's willingness to take every sinner into acceptance. There is a barrier in these evil hearts of unbelief, against the admission of a filial confidence in God. We see no mildness in the aspect of the Deity. Our guilty fears suggest the apprehension of a stern and vindictive character. There is a veil which hides from the eye of flesh this greatest of spiritual Beings; and to our fancy there lurk behind it the undefined images of wrath and terror and severe majesty. It is not in the power of argument to do away this impression. It does not lie within the compass of strenuous asseveration to dislodge it. The minister may put forth all his eloquence, and tell you in tones as gentle as ever dropt from the lips of persuasion, that God is love; and that his every aspiration after His lost and fallen children is tenderness. He may melt, and soothe, and for a time compose your hearts by his winning assurances of God's goodwill to you; and you may weep and wonder at your injurious sentiments of so good a Father. He may put the assertion into your mouth, that God wishes me well—but secretly you have other feelings of Him. Your mind recurs to its rooted and habitual jealousy of God. There lies a darkling cloud of suspicion over your every impression of the Deity. The earnest assurances of the preacher may disperse it for a moment; but his voice ceases and it again gathers over you. You leave the church, and you carry away with you a heart as uncheered as ever by the light of God's countenance. You recur for another week to your familiar employments, and your path in life is as unblest as ever by a sense of God's reconciled presence. There may be an occasional joy in these hearts of yours; but when we come to examine it, it is not joy in God. There may be all the repose of an undisturbed security in your minds; but it is not a security resting on a sentiment of conscious acceptance with God. It is joy in the creature. It is security in earthly things. It is the idolatry of a heart, delighting itself with that which drives all painful and fatiguing thoughts of God away from it. The gay or peaceful tenor of your lives, is no evidence of trust on your part in the good-will or in the graciousness of God. It only proves how seldom you think of Him. When you do think of Him, it is not with the delighted confidence of children. There is a jealousy of God, which haunts you and hangs over you; and, to escape from the painfulness of this, do you take up with other things, to which the heart recurs with a readier and more habitual fondness. Could we succeed in obtaining for the lesson of our text, the full persuasion of your minds, it would not be so. If you saw the good-will of God, in all that kindly and endearing character which belongs to it, you would find a treasure in which you would greatly delight yourself. He would become that secure and joyful habitation to which you would resort continually. The heart would be taken up with Him, as its strength and its portion. Other things might pass at times before the attention, and be as much loved as not to impair the supremacy of the love of God over all your affections But He would ever remain the object of the ruling desire which filled and actuated your bosoms: And if we find that a desire after the creature, occupies that place within you which should be taken up by a desire after the Creator—then all the tranquillity of worldly men, and all the careless and animating gaiety which abounds among them, will not convince us that a peaceful confidence in the good-will of the divine Being, is the sentiment which they carry in their hearts. O no! it is not because they think God to be their friend, that they move along so securely and so pleasantly. It is because they do not think of Him at all. It is because they find a sufficiency in the things of sight and sense, which

are around them; and they forget the unseen Being who formed all and who supports all. They have their treasure and their enjoyment on earth; and, as to the God who made it, they hate Him, they distrust Him, they are afraid of Him.

Now though we are persuaded, that a real belief, existing in the minds of these people, of God's undoubted good-will towards them, would have the effect of charming them away from the deceitful enjoyments of the world, and making them rest their enjoyment in the possession and in the service of God—yet it is not them we have chiefly in our eye, when we press in your hearing, the argument of our text. They are people of another temperament, whom we are adverting to—people who brood in anxiety over their chance of a higher interest than any that this world can offer—people who are smitten and softened, under a sense of unworthiness—people who walk in darkness and have no light, who cannot win the length of cheerful confidence in God, who long after a sense of His good-will but cannot obtain it; and who, so far from never thinking of Him, are much employed in pondering His ways, and who think of Him often, but do it with trembling and with much heaviness. We know that they will not be made to see God, in that aspect of graciousness which belongs to Him, till the power of a special revelation be made to rest upon them—till God Himself who created light out of darkness shine in their hearts: But knowing also, that He makes use of the word as His instrument, it is our part to lay the assurances of that word, in all their truth and in all their tenderness before you. God swears by Himself, that He has no pleasure in your death. That He may prevail upon you to trust Him, He tries every expedient. He does all that tenderness can devise to remove your every suspicion; and to cheer you on to a confidence in His good-will. He pleads the matter with you. He beseeches you to accept of reconciliation at His hand. He offers it as a gift, and descends so far as to knock at the door of your hearts and to crave your acceptance of it. To do away the obstructions which lay in the road of access from a sinner to his offended God, He set up the costly apparatus of redemption. As the remission of sins without the shedding of blood is impossible, He cleared the way between Him and a guilty world of this mighty barrier. Rather than lose you for ever, He sent His Son to pour out His soul unto death for you. And now that iniquity is put an end to—now that an everlasting righteousness is brought in—now that every attribute of His nature has been magnified by the great Sacrifice—now that the weight of that heavy burden, which restrained the expression of his good-will to the children of men, has been done away by Him who bore the chastisement of our peace—now that there is nothing to intercept the flow of friendship from God to man, does it come down free as the light of day and rich as the exhuberance of heaven upon a despairing world.

II. We now proceed, in the second place, to the object of the gospel message—men—a message of good-will to men. We think that much is to be gathered, from the general and unrestricted way in which this object is stated. The announcement which was heard from the canopy of heaven, was not good-will to certain men to the exclusion of others. It is not an offer made to some, and kept back from the rest of the species. It is generally to man. The generality of the term tells us that no one individual needs to look upon himself, as shut out from the good-will of his Father in heaven. Let him be who he may, we cheer him on to confidence in God's good-will to him; and we do so purely and singly in virtue of his being a man. We see no exception in the text; and we make no exception from the pulpit. We find a general assurance in the word of God; and we cast it abroad among you, without reserve and without limitation. Where it is to light, and who the individual whose bosom it is to enter as the harbinger of peace we know not—but sure we are that it can never light wrong; and that wherever faith in God is formed, it is followed by the fulfilment of all His promises. We know well the scruples of the disconsolate; and with what success a perverse melancholy can devise and multiply its arguments for despair. But we will admit of none of

them. We look at our text, and find that it recognises no outcast. By one comprehensive sweep, it takes in the whole race of man; and empowers the messenger of God, to ply with the assurances of His good-will, all the individuals of all its families. We see that there is no straitening with God—that favour and forgiveness are ready to come down abundantly from Him upon every son and daughter of the species—that His mercy rejoices over all—and that in pouring it forth over the wide extent of a sinful creation, the unbelief of man is the only obstacle which it has to struggle with. Tell us not, in the obstinacy of your distrust, that you are such a sinner—all your sins, many and aggravated as they are, are the sins of a man. Tell us not of the malignity of your disease—it is the disease of a man. Tell us not of your being so grievous an offender that you are the very chief of them. Still you are a man. Christ knew what was in man; and He knew all the varieties of case and of character which belong to Him. And still there must be something in His gospel to meet all and to make up for all—for He impairs not by one single exception, the universality of the gospel message, which is good-will to man. We again lift in your hearing the widely sounding call. Look unto Him all ye ends of the earth and be saved. If the call be not listened to, it is not for want of kindness and freeness and honesty in the call—it is for want of confidence in the called. There is no straitening with God. It is all with yourselves. It lies in the cold and dark and narrow suspicions which stifle and fill up your own bosoms. The offer of God's good-will is through Christ Jesus, unto all and upon all them that believe. We want to lodge this offer in your hearts, and you will not let us. We want to woo you into confidence, but you remain sullen and inflexible. We want to whisper peace to your souls; but you refuse the voice of the charmer, let him charm ever so wisely. We stand here as the ambassador of a beseeching God, and we are charged with His freest and kindest invitations to one and to all of you. We do not exceed our commission by a single inch, when we tell of God's good-will to you, and that nothing is awanting but your good-will towards God, t you may obtain peace and reconciliati and joy. All who will may come a drink of the waters of life freely. G fastens a mark of exclusion upon no of you. He bids us preach the gospel every creature; and every creature w believes will be saved. He has no pl sure in any of your deaths. Believe a ye shall be saved. Draw near unto G and He will draw near unto you. Tu ye, turn ye, why will you die? W speak in the very language of Go though we fall infinitely short of such tone and of such a tenderness as He h over you. If you think otherwise God, you do Him an injustice. Yo look at Him with the jaundiced eye unbelief. You array Him in a dark shroud than belongs to Him. You ma tle one of the attributes of the Divinit from the view of your own mind. Yo withdraw your faith from His own decl ration of His own name, as the Lord Go merciful and gracious. Instead of yiel ing the homage of your confidence an your affection to the true God, you s perstitiously tremble before a god of you own fancy. You put all the earnest an repeated assurances of God's actual rev lation away from you; and nourish i your hearts such a cold and distant an timid apprehension of the Deity, as, i persisted in, will land you in an inhe itance among the unbelieving and th fearful.

And here the question occurs to us—how does the declaration of God's good will in the text, consist with the entir and everlasting destruction of so man of the species? In point of fact, all me are not saved. We speak not of thos who never heard of Jesus—for instead o spending our strength in attempts to diss pate the obscurity which hangs over th hidden counsels of God, we want ever thing we say to bear on the great obje of a home and a practical applicatio But of those who have heard of the nam of Jesus—how few alas find the way t life—how many are carried along th broad way that leadeth to destructio How does the good-will of the text obtai accomplishment upon them; and in wha way are they the objects of good-wil who eventually shall be punished wit everlasting destruction from the presenc

of the Lord and from the glory of His power? Understand then that the good-will of the text, consists, not in the actual bestowment of eternal life upon all in the next world; but in holding out, in this world, the gift of eternal life to the free and welcome acceptance of all. We hold out a gift to two people, which one of them may take and the other may refuse. The good-will in me which prompted the offer, was the same in reference to both. God in this sense willeth that all men shall be saved. We are doing His will, when we lay the gift of eternal life before each and all of you. Some may refuse to know God, and to obey the gospel of His Son; but this does not impair the frankness and the freeness and the cordiality with which the gift is shown to all, and all are invited to take hold of it. Nay, the good-will of God to those who have rejected the salvation of the gospel, may look more conspicuous in the day of judgment, than His good-will to those who have received it. It might not be so, had He only issued one call—had He plied them with one invitation, and never repeated it. But He has done more than made one invitation. He has made it again and again. It has been repeated in a thousand forms. From the first moment that you understood your Bibles, you had the invitation. Every time you see the Bible, you may again have the invitation. Every time you read, "If any man is athirst let him come unto me and drink," you get another invitation. Every time you hear the minister faithfully expounding the oracles of God there is still another invitation: And will you deny the good-will of God to you at this moment—that He has brought you in life and listening around us—and to-day if ye will hear His voice you have another invitation. None of you have reason to complain of God. He is at this moment wiping His hands of you; and on the great theatre of judgment it will be made to appear, that there is no backwardness and no straitening on His part. The offer is not to this one man among you and to that other, to the exclusion of all the rest. It is to man in general; and if the word of salvation have reached you, the offer of salvation is made to you. To accept of that offer is to discern its reality—it is to put faith in the honesty and good-will with which it is laid before you—it is to trust in the promise which is unto all and upon all who believe. In stating these matters we shall be as general in our address to the assembled multitude, as the apostle Peter was before us. He said repent every one of you—we say believe every one of you; and according to your faith so will it be done unto you. Be assured every one of you, that God has good-will towards each and towards all. There is no limitation with Him; and be not you limited by your own narrow and fearful and superstitious conceptions of Him.

III. But this leads us in the last place, to press home the lesson of the text, on you who are now sitting and listening around us. God, in the act of ushering the gospel into the world, declares good-will to man. He declares it therefore to you. You are not excluded from this general declaration. To you the word of salvation has come, for we are now addressing it to you—and we call you to give way to the impressive condition, of a God beseeching you to be reconciled—a God who intends your benefit—a God who professes Himself to be actuated by good-will to one and to all of you. You have read in a book of voyages, of the many expedients which are tried to gain the confidence of the natives in a before undiscovered country; and how mortifying it is, when every demonstration of good-will is misunderstood or resisted. They had never seen such a ship—they had never beheld such a people—and, kept back by terror, every attempt to woo their approach is in vain exhausted upon them. Would they only stand to receive our gifts, or to hear our assurances of kindness, we might soon ingratiate ourselves into their confidence. But no! they run to their woods, or to their lurking holes; and it is not till after many signs of invitation have been rejected—after many attempts to gain their confidence have proved ineffectual—after many expedients for bringing round a friendly intercourse with the natives have turned out to be fruitless and unavailing—It is not till after many repeated experiments of this kind, that the inhabitants begin at length to receive

their favours—to put faith in the professions of the strangers—and to rejoice in the assurance of their benevolence and good-will. Now, the rest of the world is not more strange to an undiscovered island, than Paradise and the beings who inhabit it are strange to the men of this sinful and banished world. The great errand from heaven to earth, of which the records have come down to us, was, not to destroy men's lives but to save them. It was altogether, if we may be allowed the expression, a voyage of benevolence—but this did not hinder the very first appearance of the heavenly visitors, from exciting the fears of weak and guilty and alienated man. When the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds, they were sore afraid—but they could not fly from his presence, and this gave him an advantage. He could talk to them. He could cheer them into confidence. He could force them to hear him, when he said—"fear not for I bring you glad tidings of great joy." He could act as a messenger of kindness, to prepare them for the more numerous host of visitors who were to follow—nor do we read of their being at all startled or dismayed, when this host joined the angel, and the whole multitude of them praised God, and said, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good-will to men. Their confidence was now gained. They gave up those fears and apprehensions which stood in the way of their faith; and we afterwards read of their glorifying and praising God, for all the things that they had heard and seen.

Now, you are liable to the same fears with these shepherds. You are guilty; and to you belong all the weakness, and all the timidity of guilt. The idea of God is apt to send terror into your hearts; and though we come over you, and over you again, with the assurance of God being gracious, of God being willing to take you all back again unto Himself, of God pressing your return with every offer of friendship and every feeling of tenderness—these fears are apt to stick to you—you cannot summon up confidence; and, in spite of the most solemn and earnest and repeated assurances of your Bible and your minister, you still keep away from God. Now tell us are these misgivings at all reasonable? Do they not carry in them a most injurious reflection against God? Do they not evince a higher respect for your own fears and your own fancies of Him than for the account of His own messengers, who came upon His errand, and left the presence of His glory, and appeared in the air to the shepherds at Bethlehem? Whatever be the dark and mysterious colouring of that imaginary veil, which hides the Deity from your observation—be assured that good-will is the real feeling which belongs to Him. Surely this is as kind a term as you can possibly wish. It carries every expression of endearment and cordiality along with it; and, try what we may, we could not devise another, more fitted to chase away your every fear, and to gain your whole confidence, and to cheer you amid all the vicissitudes of your life and all the terrors of your fancy. And, when like to lose the comfort of faith, we know no one expression, which, when summoned up to the memory, and dwelt upon with perseverance, and determinedly held by amid all the darkness and discomforts which meet the heart in the multitude of its thoughts, is more fitted than the single expression of good-will to restore light to my soul and make me say why art thou disquieted within me?

By bringing your minds to the delightful confidence, which a belief in the truth of all this is fitted to inspire, you are exercising that very high faith with which God is well pleased. You cease from affronting Him by your suspicions. You do honour to His testimony. You set to your seal that God is true. He no longer grieves for the hardness of your hearts, when they give up their resistance to the impressive consideration of His good-will to you; and to the affecting proofs of His good-will, in His Son suffering for you, His Son dying for you, His Son bearing for your sakes a load of mysterious agony, and pouring out the blood of atonement to wash you from the guilt and the pollution of all your iniquities. We have experienced long enough the utter powerlessness of all human argument, to think that what we have said will open a way to your hearts, unless the Spirit interpose, and give His efficacy to the testimony of Christ's sufferings and death. He can

melt you. He can compel you to listen and to believe. He can make you feel the burden of those hateful sins by which you are encompassed. He can point your eye to the Saviour, that best pledge and evidence of God's good-will to you; and make you exclaim with joyful confidence, I have been in quest of a remedy, and here at length have I found it. Cherish no doubt as to its efficacy. Have your eye opened to the freeness of the offer, and to the value of the thing offered. If the power of God's grace go along with the utterance of our direction —then He is doing by an instrument, what He is able to do without one—He is working faith in you with power—He is lifting that veil, which keeps out the entrance of the glorious gospel, from the minds of those who are blinded by the god of this world—He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is shining in your heart; to give you the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXXI.

On the Respect Due to Antiquity.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."—JEREMIAH vi. 16.

IT has been well said by Lord Bacon, that the antiquity of past ages is the youth of the world—and therefore it is an inversion of the right order, to look for greater wisdom in some former generation than there should be in our present day. "The time in which we now live," says this great philosopher, "Is properly the ancient time, because now the world is ancient; and not that time which we call ancient, when we look in a retrograde direction, and by a computation backward from ourselves." There must be a delusion, then, in that homage which is given to the wisdom of antiquity, as if it bore the same superiority over the wisdom of the present times, which the wisdom of an old does over that of a young man. When we speak of the wisdom of any age, we mean the wisdom which at that period belongs to the collective mind of the species. But it is an older species at present than it was in those days, called by us, the days of antiquity. It is now both more venerable in years, and carries a greater weight of experience. It was a child before the flood; and if it have not yet become a man, it is nearer to manhood now than it was then. Therefore, when reviewing the notions and the usages of our forefathers we, instead of casting off the instructions of a greater wisdom than our own, may, in fact, be putting away from us childish things. It is in vain to talk of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle. Only grant that there may still be as many good individual specimens of humanity as before; and a Socrates now, with all the additional lights which have sprung up in the course of intervening centuries to shine upon his understanding, would be a greatly wiser man than the Socrates of a thousand years ago. It is therefore well, in the great master of the New Philosophy, to have asserted the prerogative, and in fact the priority, of our present age; that to it belongs a more patriarchal glory than to all the ages of all the patriarchs; that our generation is a more hoary-headed chronicler, and is more richly laden with the truths and the treasures of wisdom, than any generation which has gone before it—the olden time, wherewith we blindly associate so much of reverence, being indeed the season of the world's youth, and the world's inexperience; and this our modern day being the true antiquity of the world.

But, however important thus to reduce the deference that is paid to antiquity; and with whatever grace and propriety it has been done by him who stands at the head of the greatest revolution in Philosophy—we shall incur the danger of run-

aing into most licentious waywardness, if we receive not the principle, to which I have now adverted, with two modifications.

You will better conceive what these modifications are, by just figuring to yourself two distinct books, whence knowledge or wisdom may be drawn—one the book of the world's experience, the other, the book of God's revelation; the one, therefore, becoming richer, and more replete with instruction every day, by the perpetual additions which are making to it; the other, being that book from which no man can take away, neither can any man add thereunto.

Our first modification, then, is, that though, in regard to all experimental truth, the world should be wiser now than it was centuries ago, this is the fruit not of our contempt or our heedlessness in regard to former ages, but the fruit of our most respectful attention to the lessons which their history affords. In other words, as we are only wiser because of the now larger book of experience which is in our hands, we are not so to scorn antiquity, as to cast that book away from us; but we are to learn from antiquity, by giving the book our most assiduous perusal, while, at the same time, we sit in the exercise of our own free and independent judgment over the contents of it. Although we listen not to antiquity, as if she sent forth the voice of an oracle, yet we should look with most observant eye to all that antiquity sets before us. She is not to be the absolute mistress of our judgment, but still she presents the best materials on which the judgment of man can possibly be exercised. The only reason, truly, why the present age should be wiser than the past, is, that it stands on that higher vantage ground which its progenitor had raised for it. But we should never have reached the vantage ground, if, utterly heedless of all that has gone before, we had spurned the informations and the science of previous generations away from us. The man of three-score should not be the wiser of his age, did a blight come over his memory, to obliterate all the experience and all the acquisitions of his former years. The very remembrance of his follies makes him wiser—and thus it is, that every succeeding race gathers a new store of instruction, not from the discoveries alone, but also from the devious absurdities and errors of all the races that had preceded it. The truth is, that an experiment may be as instructive by its failure as by its success—in the one case serving as a beacon, and in the other as a guide; and so from the very errors and misgivings of former days might we gather, by the study of them, the most solid and important accessions to our wisdom. We do right in not submitting to the dictation of antiquity; but that is no cause why we should refuse to be informed by her—for this were throwing us back again to the world's infancy, like the second childhood of him whom disease had bereft of all his recollections. Still we reserve the independence of our own judgment, while we take this retrospective survey, and ask for the old paths, and so compare them together as to separate the right from the wrong, and fix at length on the good way. And so, again, in the language of Bacon, "Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken then to make progression."

On pondering well the view that has been now given, you will come to perceive how there is in truth a perfect harmony between the utmost independence on the dictates of antiquity on the one hand, and on the other the most deferential regard to all its informations.

But there is a second modification, which, in the case of a single individual of the species, it is easy to understand, and which we shall presently apply to the whole species. There is a wisdom distinct from knowledge; and one rich in the acquisitions of the latter, may practically be driven from the way of the former, by the headlong impulse of his vicious and wrong affections. Now, a book of wisdom may be taught in very early childhood. It may, it is true, be the product of the accumulated experience of all ages; but it also may, as being a book of moral instructions, and so dictated by the inspiration of a higher faculty than that of mere observation—it may, instead of having been produced by a slow experience, have been produced by the enlightened conscience of its author, although afterwards all ex-

perience would attest the way of its precepts to be a way of interest and of safety, as well as a way of excellence. The lessons of such a book may be urged upon man, and with all a parent's tenderness, from the outset of his education. He may have been trained by it to observe all the infant proprieties, and to lisp the infant's prayer. It may have been the guide and the companion of his boyhood; and not, perhaps, till in the wild misrule of youthful profligacies and passions, did he shut his eyes to the pure religious light wherewith it had shone upon his ways. We may conceive of such a man, that, after many years of vicious indulgence, of growing and at length confirmed hardihood, of gradually decaying and now almost extinct sensibility,—we may conceive of this hackneyed veteran in the world and all its evil ways, that he is at once visited by the lights of conscience and memory; and that thus he is enabled to contrast the dislike, and the dissatisfaction, and the dreariness of heart, which now prey on the decline of his earthly existence, with all the comparative innocence which gladdened its hopeful and its happy morning. The wisdom of *his* manhood did not grow with his experience; for now that he looks back upon it, he finds it but a mortifying retrospect of wretchedness and folly; and the only way in which this experience can be of use to him now is that it may serve as a foil by which to raise in his eyes the lustre and the loveliness of virtue. And as he bethinks him of his first, his early home, of the Sabbath piety which flourished there, and that holy atmosphere in which he was taught to breathe with kindred aspirations, he cannot picture to himself the bliss and the beauty of such a scene, mellowed as it is by the distance, perhaps, of half a century, and mingled with the dearest recollections of parents, and sisters, and other kindred now mouldering in the dust, he cannot recall for a moment this fond, though faded imagery, without sighing in the bitterness of his heart, after the good old way.

Now, what applies to one individual, may apply to the species. As the world grows older, it may, by some sweeping obliteration of all its ancient documents, lapse again into second infancy; or even though it should retain all its experimental truth, and grow every day richer therein, yet it is conceivable that, from various causes it may come to shut its eyes against that moral or that revealed truth, which both are the offspring of a higher source than mere human experience. The one, or moral truth, may be taught in all its perfection to man when an infant; and the other, or revealed truth, may have been delivered to the world when it was young. Neither can be added to by the faculty of observation; and, unlike to the lessons of philosophy, the lessons of morality and revelation do not accumulate by the succession of ages. And just as the individual man might deviate, in the progress of years, from the pure and perfect virtues that were inculcated upon his childhood, so the collective species might stray, in the progress of centuries, from that unsullied light which had been held forth to them by the lamp of revelation. In a prolonged course of waywardness, they may have wandered very far from the truth of heaven. They may have renounced all that docility and that duteous subordination which characterize the disciples of a former age. Like as the tyranny of youthful passions might overbear the authority of those instructions which had been given by an earthly parent, so the tyranny of prejudice might overbear the authority of the lessons and the laws which had been given to the world by our heavenly Father. And like as the great spiritual adversary of the human race might, by the corrupt ascendancy which he wields over the hearts of men, seduce them from the piety of their early days—so, by means of a priesthood upon earth, standing forth to their prostrate and superstitious worshippers, and exercising over them all the power of Satan transformed into an angel of light, might he delude whole successive generations from the pure and primitive religion of their forefathers. And after, perhaps, a whole dreary millennium of guilt and of darkness, may some gifted individual arise, who can look athwart the gloom, and descry the purer and the better age of Scripture light which lies beyond it. And as he compares all the errors and the mazes of that vast labyrinth into

which so many generations had been led by the jugglery of deceivers, with that simple but shining path which conducts the believer unto glory, let us wonder not that the aspiration of his pious and patriotic heart should be for the good old way.

We now see wherein it is that the modern might excel the ancient. In regard to experimental truth, he can be as much wiser than his predecessors, as the veteran and the observant sage is wiser than the unpractised stripling, to whom the world is new, and who has yet all to learn of its wonders and of its ways. The voice that is now emitted from the schools, whether of physical or political science, is the voice of the world's antiquity. The voice emitted from the same schools, in former ages, was the voice of the world's childhood, which then gave forth in lisping utterance the conceits and the crudities of its young unchastened speculation. But in regard to things not experimental, in regard even to taste, or to imagination, or to moral principle, as well as to the stable and unchanging lessons of divine truth, there is no such advancement. For the perfecting of these we have not to wait the slow processes of observation and discovery, handed down from one generation to another. They address themselves more immediately to the spirit's eye; and just as in the solar light of day, our forefathers saw the whole of visible creation as perfectly as we—so in the lights, whether of fancy or of conscience, or of faith, they may have had as just and vivid a perception of Nature's beauties; or they may have had as ready a discrimination, and as religious a sense of all the proprieties of life; or they may have had a veneration as solemn, and an acquaintance as profound, with the mysteries of revelation, as the men of our modern and enlightened day. And, accordingly, we have as sweet or sublime an eloquence, and as transcendant a poetry, and as much both of the exquisite and noble in all the fine arts, and a morality as delicate and dignified, and to crown the whole, as exalted and as informed a piety in the remoter periods of the world as among ourselves, to whom the latter ends of the world have come. In respect to these, we are not on higher vantage ground than many of the generations that have gone by. But neither are we on lower vantage ground. We have access to the same objects. We are in possession of the same faculties. And, if between the age in which we live, and some bright and by-gone era, there should have intervened the deep and the long-protracted haze of many centuries, whether of barbarism in taste, or of profligacy in morals, or of superstition in Christianity, it will only heighten, by comparison, to our eyes, the glories of all that is excellent; and if again awakened to light and to liberty, it will only endear the more to our hearts the good old way.

We now proceed to the application of these preliminary remarks. We do not think that we presume too much, when we address ourselves to the majority of those who are here present, as if they were the friends and adherents of the Church of Scotland; and we shall endeavour, on the principles which we have just attempted to expound, first to appreciate the titles of the founders of that church to the respect and the confidence of its disciples—and, secondly, to consider how this respect should be qualified, so as not to degenerate into idolatry.

You will now perceive, how, in regard to all experimental truth, the moderns, furnished as they are with a larger and more luminous book of experience, should, in the language of the Psalmist, "understand more than the ancients,—and, secondly, how in regard to all theological truth, furnished as they are, with the same unaltered and unalterable book of revelation, they should at least understand as much as the ancients. Some would on this ground too, contend for the superiority of our modern day, because of the successive labours of that criticism wherewith the Sacred Volume is not amended or added to, but wherewith the obscurities which are upon the face of it, may be gradually cleared away. We do not lay great stress on this observation, for, without depreciating the worth of Scriptural criticism, we cannot admit that all the additional light which is evolved by it, bears more than a very small fractional value to the breadth

and the glory of that effulgence which shines from our English Bible, on the mind of an ordinary peasant. On either supposition, however, the most enlightened of our moderns, is, in regard to the one book, on fully equal, and in regard to the other, on a far higher vantage ground than the most enlightened of our ancients; and while it is our part to be as profoundly submissive as they, to all that has been said, and to all that has been done, by the God who is above us, here we sit in the entire right of our own independent judgment on all that has been said, and on all that has been done, by the men who have gone before us.

The great service then for which the Scottish and other reformers, in their respective countries, deserve the gratitude of posterity, is not that they shone upon us with any original light of their own, but simply that they cleared away a most grievous obstruction which had stood for ages, and intercepted from the eyes of mankind the light of the book of revelation. This they did, by asserting, in behalf of God, the paramount authority of his Scripture over the belief and the consciences of men; and asserting in behalf of man, his right of private judgment on the doctrine and the information which are contained in the oracles of God. This right of private judgment, you will observe, is a right maintained not against the authority of God, but against the authority of men, who have either added to the oracles of God, or who have assumed to themselves the office of being the infallible and ultimate interpreters of his word. It was against this that our reformers went forth and prevailed. Theirs was a noble struggle for the spiritual liberties of the human race, against the papacy of Rome, and nobly did they acquit themselves of this holy warfare. At first it was a fearful conflict; when, on the one side, there was the whole strength of the secular arm, and, on the other, a few obscure but devoted men, whose only weapons were truth and prayer, and suffering constancy. And it is a cheering thought, and full of promise both for the moral and political destinies of our world, that, after all, the great and the governing force which men ultimately obey, is that of Opinion —that the cause of truth and righteousness, cradled by the rough hand of persecutors, and nurtured to maturity amid the terrors of fierce and fiery intolerance, is sure at length to overbear its adversaries—that contempt, and cruelty, and the decrees of arbitrary power, and the fires, of bloody martyrdom, are but its stepping stones to triumph—that in the heat and the hardihood of this sore discipline, it grows like the indestructible seed, and at last forces its resistless way to a superiority and a strength, before which the haughtiest potentates of our world are made to tremble. The reformation by Luther is far the proudest example of this in history—who, with nought but a sense of duty and the energies of his own undaunted heart to sustain him, went forth single-handed against the hosts of a most obdurate corruption that filled all Europe and had weathered the lapse of many centuries—who, by the might of his own uplifted arm, shook the authority of that high pontificate which had held the kings and the great ones of the earth in thraldom—who, with no other weapons than those of argument and Scripture, brought down from its peering altitude, that old spiritual tyranny, whose head reached unto heaven, and which had the entrenchments of deepest and strongest prejudice thrown around its base. When we can trace a result so magnificent as this to the workings of one solitary spirit —when the breast of Luther was capable of holding the germ or the embryo of the greatest revolution which the world ever saw—when we observe how many kindred spirits caught from his the fire of that noble inspiration by which it was actuated, and how powerfully the voice which he lifted up in the midst of Germany, was re-echoed to from the distant extremities of Europe by other voices,— O! let us not despair of truth's omnipotence, and of her triumph; but rest assured that, let despots combine to crush that moral energy which they shall never conquer, or to put out that flame which they shall find to be inextinguishable, there is now a glorious awakening abroad upon the world, and, in despite of all their policy, the days of its perfect light and its perfect liberty are coming.

Our own Knox was one in the likeness of Luther; and, perhaps, by nature of a firmer and hardier temperament

that he. For it must be observed of the German reformer, that there were about him a certain softness and love of tranquillity, which inclined him more to the shade of a studious retirement, than to the high places of society. The truth is, that most gladly would he have hid himself in some academic bower from the strifes and the storms of the open world; and sore was the struggle in his bosom ere he did adventure himself into the scenes of controversy from which he afterwards came off so victorious. It was fortunate for mankind, that though his love of peace was strong, his sense of duty was yet stronger, and that with a force which he felt to be imperious, it bore him through the heats and the hazards of his great warfare. Still it was at the expense of a most painful conflict with the tender and the tremulous sensibilities of his nature; for really, the man's native element was contemplation; and then did he find himself at his most appropriate exercise, when by the weapons, whether of a spiritual or literary championship, he fought, as he did, most manfully, the battles of the faith. Our countryman was altogether of sterner mood; and with a certain rigidity of fibre which the other had not, could better sustain himself in the fray, and the onset, and the close encounter of more immediate assailants. It has been said of him, in virtue of his impregnable nervous system, that he never feared the face of clay, and thus was he admirably fitted for the conduct of a high enterprise, amid the terrors of scowling royalty, and among the turbulent nobles of our land. Each had a part to sustain; and each was singularly qualified by Providence for the performance of it,—the one, from his closet to spread the light of the principles of reformation over the face of Christendom—the other, in the boisterous politics of a court, or by the energy of his living voice from the pulpit, to do the executive work of reformation in one of the provinces of Christendom. It is obvious that Luther's was the superior station of the two; and that to him Knox was subordinate. And it is well in this bustling age, when there is so much of demand from the public functionaries of our Church for the labour of mere handiwork, and so little for that of literary preparation—it is well to notice, in the present instance, that while the practical talent of Knox carried him to such high ascendancy over the affairs of men, the pure and the powerful intellect of Luther won for him a higher ascendancy still—that through the medium of the press, and by virtue of scholarship alone, he bore with greater weight than did all his coadjutors on the living history of the world—and that, after all, it was from the cell of studious contemplation, from the silent depository of a musing and meditative spirit, there came forth the strongest and the most widely felt impulse on the mechanism of human society.

This then is the first great service which our Reformers achieved for mankind, even freedom of access to the Scriptures of truth, and the right of private judgment, explained as we have already done over the contents of it. The second, which springs immediately from the first, but which deserves a separate consideration, is a theology not created by them, but a theology evolved by them and most eminently subservient both to the peace and the holiness of individuals, and to the general virtues of the world.

In Milner's Church History (a book that I would commend to the perusal of every devout and desirous Christian) we have a deeply interesting narrative of those mental processes through which Luther did at length find rest to his soul. There was nought whatever in all the penances of that laborious superstition wherein he had been educated, that could bring peace to his conscience, deeply stricken as it was by a sense of guilt, and of the holiness and awful majesty of that Being against whom he had offended. The Spirit of God seems, in the first instance, to have convinced him, and that most pungently and most profoundly, of the malignity of sin; and then it was that he felt how, in the whole round of the observances and absolutions of the Church of Rome he could meet with no adequate Saviour. Meanwhile the law pursued him with its exactions and its terrors, and long and weary was the period of his spirit's agitations ere he arrived at that hiding-place in which alone he could confidently feel that he was safe. He experienced, in regard to all the ceremonies of that corrupt ritual in which he had been

trained, what the apostle affirms in regard to the not impure, but still imperfect ritual of Moses. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." And thus, after the payment of all the debts and of all the drudgeries which his church had ordained for transgression, he felt that his sins were not taken away. He performed them, but he was not purged by them; and so a sense of his unexpiated guilt still adhered to him, like an arrow sticking fast. It was then that he was led to ask for the old paths that he might find out the good way, and walk therein. And it was not till the light of Scripture, beaming with its own direct radiance, and powerfully reflected from the pages of Augustine, shone upon his inquiry—not till he came within view of that great sacrifice which was made once for the sins of the world—not till the imaginary merit of human actions was all swept away, and there was substituted in its place the everlasting righteousness which Christ hath brought in—not till he saw the free and welcome recourse which one and all have upon this righteousness by faith; and how instead of springing from the toilsome but polluted obedience of man upon earth, it comes graciously down in a descending ministration from heaven, upon those who believe,—Not till then, could he behold the reparation that was commensurate with the demand and the dignity of God's violated law. Now was he made, and for the first time, to understand, that under the canopy of the appointed mediatorship, he might continue to hear the thunders of the law, yet feel that they rolled innocuous over him: and this, my brethren, was the place both of enlargement and of quietness, where he found rest unto his soul.

It is this doctrine of imputed righteousness that gives to the gospel message the character of a joyful sound, the going forth of which among all nations shall at length both reconcile and regenerate the world. That were indeed a gladsome land where this truth was preached with acceptance and with power from all the pulpits. It is, in fact, the great bond of re-union between earth and heaven. It is like a cord of love let down from the upper sanctuary among the sinful men who are below; and with every sinner who takes hold, it proves the conductor along which the virtues of heaven, as well as the peace of heaven, descend upon him. This doctrine of grace is altogether a doctrine according to godliness, and as much fitted to emancipate the heart from the tyranny of sin as from the terrors of that vengeance which is due to it. O, it is an idle fear, lest the preaching of the cross should spread the licentiousness of a proclaimed impunity among the people. All experience assures the opposite; and that in parishes which are almost all plied with the free offers of forgiveness through the blood of a satisfying atonement, there we have the best and the holiest families.

But it may be suspected, that although such a theology is the minister of peace, it cannot be the minister of holiness. Now, to those who have this suspicion, and who would represent the doctrine of justification by faith—that article as Luther calls it, of a standing or falling church—as adverse to the interests of virtue, I would put one question, and ask them to resolve it. How comes it that Scotland, which, of all the countries in Europe, is the most signalized by the rigid Calvinism of her pulpits, should also be the most signalized by the moral glory that sits on the aspect of her general population? How, in the name of mystery, should it happen that such a theology as ours is conjoined with perhaps the yet most unvitiated peasantry among the nations of Christendom? The allegation against our Churches is, that in the argumentation of our abstract and speculative controversies, the people are so little schooled to the performance of good works. And how then is it, that in our courts of justice, when compared with the calendars of our sister kingdom, there should be so vastly less to do with their evil works? It is certainly a most important experience, that in that country where there is the most of Calvanism, there should be the least of crime,—that what may be called the most doctrinal nation of Europe, should, at the same time, be the least depraved—and the land wherein people are most deeply imbued with the principles of salvation by grace, should be the least distempered either by their weekday profligacies, or their Sabbath profanations.

When Knox came over from the school of Geneva, he brought its strict, and, at that time, uncorrupted orthodoxy, along with him; and with it he pervaded all the formularies of that church which was founded by him; and not only did it flame abroad from all our pulpits, but, through our schools and our catechisms, it was brought down to the boyhood of our land; and from one generation to another, have our Scottish youth been familiarized to the sound of it from their very infancy; and unpromising as such a system of tuition might be in the eye of the mere academic moralist to the object of building up a virtuous and well-doing peasantry, certain it is, that, as the wholesale result, there has palpably come forth of it the most moral peasantry in Europe notwithstanding. We know of great and grievous declensions, partly owing to the extension of our crowded cities being most inadequately followed up by such a multiplication of churches and parishes as might give fair scope to the energies of our ecclesiastical system; and principally, we fear to a declension from that very theology which has been denounced as the enemy of practical righteousness. But on this last topic we forbear to detain you; for vastly rather than expatiate on the degeneracies of what may be termed the middle age of the Church of Scotland, we incline to rejoice in the symptoms of its bright and blessed revival; and would therefore only say, that should, in mockery of these anticipations, the people of our land fall wholly away from the integrity of their forefathers—should there come a great and general deterioration in the worth of our common people, it will only be because preceded by a great and general deterioration in the zeal, and the doctrines, and the services of our clergymen. And if ever the families of our beloved land shall have apostatised from the virtues of the olden time, it will lie at the door of pastors who have been unfaithful to their trust, and of pastors who have apostatised from the good old divinity of other days.

But in this enumeration of Knox's services to Scotland, we must now pass on from the theology of this great reformer, to what may be called certain arrangements of ecclesiastical polity, which, through his means have been instituted in our land. And this is the subject, we think, upon which the schemes and the settlements of a comparatively younger age lie most open to the animadversions of a now older world; for, while a perfect theology may be drawn at once from the now finished book of revelation, it is not a perfect ecclesiastical polity, but only one that admits of successive improvements, which can be drawn from the yet unfinished, but constantly progressive book of experience. On this ground, therefore, we shall consent to be enlightened by the venerable founder of our church, but we shall not consent to be enthralled by him; and, in fearlessly commenting both upon his excellencies and his errors, we feel ourselves to be only breathing in that element of liberty wherewith himself did impregnate the atmosphere of our now emancipated land—to be only following that noble example of independence which himself has bequeathed to us.

But in this part of our exposition, we must be very far shorter than the magnitude of the theme would require; for it is the misfortune of almost every occasional sermon, that the topics wherewith it stands associated, are far too unwieldy for one address—else we should have ventured to apply our introductory principles on the subject of ancient authorities and ancient times, more closely than we can now afford to the question, of that precise deference which is due to our illustrious Reformer. We should have especially urged it upon you, that neither he nor any other of the venerable Founders of our establishment, shone upon us in their own radiance, but only by a light reflected upon us from the pure and primary radiance of Scripture—and that, in fact, the great service which they rendered to posterity, lay in the removal of those obstructions which stood between the truths of revelation, and the private independent judgment of men. It is in virtue of their exertions, that each may now look to the Bible with his own eyes, and not with the eyes of another; and we only use the privilege which they have won for us, when we try even themselves, either by that book of revelation, which shines as brightly upon us as upon them, or by that book of experience

to which every century is adding so many leaves, and which at present shines more brightly than ever on the men of our now older world. The man of the day that now is, if thoroughly and intelligently read in that book, is as much wiser than the man of a distant antiquity, as the hoary-headed sage is wiser than a stripling. And in utter reversal of the prevailing tendency to idolize the men of other days, as if they were the patriarchs of our species, we affirm, that the Luthers, and the Knoxes, and the Calvins, and the Zuingliuses of old, are but as the youths of this world's history; and if there be any individuals now gifted with as great a degree of mental vigour and sagacity, they with a larger book of experience before them, are, in truth, its bearded and its venerable patriarchs.

We shall now, however, confine ourselves to a very few sentences about three distinct matters of ecclesiastical polity—and that chiefly as specimens of the way in which a man of great authority and reputation may be deferred to when we think that he is in the right; and be questioned, when we doubt that he is in the wrong.

Our first, then, is a topic of the most cordial and unmixed eulogy. Knox was the chief compiler of the First Book of Discipline, and to him we owe our present system of parochial education. By that scheme of ecclesiastical polity, a school was required for every parish; and, had all its views been followed up, a college would have been erected in every notable town. On this inestimable service done to Scotland we surely do not need to expatiate. The very mention of it lights up an instant and enthusiastic approval in every bosom. And with all the veneration that is due on other grounds to our Reformer, we hold it among the proudest glories of his name, that it stands associated with an institution, which has spread abroad the light of a most beauteous moral decoration throughout all the hamlets of our land, and is dear to every Scottish heart as are the piety and the worth of its peasant families.

In the second topic, to which we shall advert, he was not so successful, but it argues not the less for his sagacity and his patriotism. We mean that contest, in which he failed, for the entire appropriation of the patrimony of the church to public objects, rather than that it should be seized upon by the rapacity of private individuals. On this matter I crave the reading of a short extract from the admirable biography of Knox by Dr. M'Crie—a work that should be enshrined in every public, and which is not sought after as it deserves, if it have not also a place in every private library of Scotland.

"Another source of distress to the Reformer, at this time, was a scheme which the courtiers had formed for altering the policy of the church, and securing to themselves the principal part of the ecclesiastical revenues. This plan seems to have been concerted under the regency of Lennox; it began to be put into execution during that of Mar, and was afterwards completed by Morton. We have already had an occasion to notice the aversion of many of the nobility to the Book of Discipline, and the principal source from which this aversion sprung. While the Earl of Murray administered the government, he prevented any new encroachments upon the rights of the church; but the succeeding regents were either less friendly to them, or less able to bridle the avarice of the more powerful nobles. Several of the richest benefices becoming vacant by the decease, or by the sequestration of the popish incumbents who had been permitted to retain them, it was necessary to determine in what manner they should be disposed of for the future. The church had uniformly required that their revenues should be divided, and applied to the support of the religious and the literary establishments; but with this demand the courtiers were by no means disposed to comply. At the same time, the total secularization of them was deemed too bold a step; nor could laymen, with any shadow of consistency, or by a valid title, hold benefices which the law declared to be ecclesiastical. The expedient resolved on was, that the bishoprics and other livings should be presented to certain ministers, who, previous to their admission, should make over the principal part of their revenues to such noblemen as had obtained the patronage of them from the court."

This most grievous error in the conduct of the Scottish reformation, (but for

which Knox is not at all chargeable) is but little understood by the public at large, and in the statement of which therefore we do not expect to be greatly sympathized with. It was that compromise which took place between the ecclesiastics and the nobles of our land; and in virtue of which the former concurred, or rather were compelled to acquiesce, in both our church and our literary establishments being shorn of their patrimony. The effect has been that a revenue, which might have been applied to the exigencies of an increasing population, now unprovided with the means of Christian instruction; or which might have been applied to uphold, in strength and in splendour, those Universities of our land, which both in their endowments and their architecture are fast hastening to degradation and decay —is now wholly secularized, and serves but to augment the expense and the luxury of private families. And in the face of all that contempt and that common-place which the beneficed priesthood of every establishment has to endure, we scruple not to say, that what Knox by his sagacity foresaw, and which he strove in vain to make head against, has been most fearfully realized,—and that the high interests both of religion and of learning suffer at this day, under the effects of that unprincipled, that truly Gothic spoliation.

We are aware of a fashionable political economy in this our day, which, for the sake of leaving untouched the splendour and the luxury of our higher classes, would suffer the public functionaries to starve; and in opposition to which we at present affirm (for we have no time to argue), that in the progress both of landed and of mercantile wealth, both the officers of religion and the officers of education have been left immeasurably too far behind in the career of an advancing society. On this topic we make common cause with all other public functionaries; and, in despite of the popular outcry against it, we hold, that from the highest judges in the land, to the humblest teacher of a village school, there ought to be one great and general augmentation—it being our first principle that every public functionary should do his duty well; and our second, that every public functionary should be well paid for the doing of it.

The third topic to which we shall advert, is that in which we hold Knox to have been in error—though precisely such an error as I think that the book of our now larger experience, in which so many lessons are inscribed since his day, of the wisdom and efficacy of toleration, would have expelled from his mind.

It was an error, however, not confined to the reformers of any particular country; for, in truth, it was shared alike among all the theologians of all the denominations in Christendom. It consisted in the imagination, and it was an imagination quite universal in these days, that Christianity could not flourish, nay, that it could not exist, save in the one framework of one certain and defined ecclesiastical constitution; and hence with us, that there could be no light and no efficacy in the ministrations of the gospel, unless they were conducted according to the forms, and in the strict model and frame-work of Presbytery. And so, in the works of some of the older worthies of the Kirk of Scotland, we read about as often of black Prelacy, as we do of her who was arrayed in scarlet, and is the mother of all abominations. Now, it is surely better that this extreme and exclusive intolerance is almost wholly done away; and better still it would be, if the two co-ordinate establishments of our island, while they kept by their own respective frame-works, should acknowledge each of the other, that although by a different machinery, there may be the same right and religious principle to animate the movements, and the same high capacities for religious usefulness with both; that if the one, perhaps, have more thoroughly leavened with Christianity the bulk of her population, the other is more signalized by the prowess of her sons, in the high walks of Christian scholarship; that in her Clarkes, and her Butlers, and her Warburtons, and her Hurds, and her Horsleys, and her Paleys, and her Watsons, we behold the divines of a church, which of all others has stood the foremost, and wielded the mightiest polemic arm in the battles of the Faith.

I entreat to be forgiven if I make one allusion more, if not to an error on the

part of our old reformers, at least to a peculiarity of theirs, which is not, to say the least of it, so authoritatively enjoined by the book of God's revelation, as to stand exempted from all charge and reckoning on the part of those who, in our own modern day, have at least the benefit of a larger and more luminous book of experience than they had. We utterly refuse to go along with the ancients of our church in their stern and severe sentiment of Prelacy. And however right they may have been in their sentiment of another denomination, yet still it is, at the very least, a questionable thing, whether they were right in their stern and severe treatment of Popery. After having wrested from Popery its armour of intolerance, was it right to wield that very armour against the enemy that had fallen? After having laid it prostrate by the use alone of a spiritual weapon, was it right or necessary, in order to keep it prostrate, to make use of a carnal one?—thus reversing the characters of that warfare, which Truth had sustained, and with such triumph, against Falsehood; and vilifying the noble cause by an associate so unseemly, as that which the power of the state can make to bear on the now disarmed and subjugated minority. Surely the very strength which won for Protestantism its ascendancy in these realms is competent of itself to preserve it; and if argument and Scripture alone have achieved the victory over falsehood, why not confide to argument and Scripture alone the maintenance of the truth? It is truly instructive to mark, how, on the moment that the forces of the statute-book were enlisted on the side of Protestantism, from that moment Popery, armed with a generous indignancy against its oppressors, put on that moral strength, which persecution always gives to every cause that is at once honoured and sustained by it. O, if the friends of religious liberty had but kept by their own spiritual weapons, when the cause was moving onward in such prosperity, and with such triumph! But when they threw aside argument, and brandished the ensigns of authority, then it was that truth felt the virtue go out of her; and falsehood, inspired with an energy before unknown, planted the unyielding footstep, and put on the resolute defiance. And now that centuries have rolled on, all the influences whether of persuation or of power, have been idly thrown away on the firm, the impracticable countenance of an aggrieved population.

But we gladly hasten away from all these topics, on some of which, indeed, we ought not to have touched, but for the purpose of illustrating the distinction between those cases in which we should defer to the voice of antiquity, and prize its direction as the good old way; and those cases in which the lesson that hath come down to us from antiquity, should be regarded in no other light than as the puerility of a then younger species, the yet weak and unformed judgment of the world's boy-hood. The light of experience which feebly glimmers at the outset of History, brightens onward in its progress. But the same does not hold of the light of revelation, which shone with as pure and as clear a radiance on the patriarchs of our church, as it hath since done on any of its succeeding generations. Nay, it is a possible thing, that in the ages which followed the first establishment of Presbytery in Scotland, there may have been deviations from the spirit and simplicity of Scripture; that the pride of intellect, and of human speculation, may have carried it high against that authoritative truth, which hath come down to our world from the upper sanctuary; that from the exercise of a careless and a corrupt patronage, many of our parishes may have been exposed to the withering influence of a careless and a corrupt clergy; that thus, in the shape of cold and heartless apathy, a moral blight, or mildew, may have descended on our land; and that, what with a meagre theology on the one hand, and an extinct or nearly expiring zeal on the other, there may have been an utter degeneracy from that golden period, when the truths of the Bible shone full upon many an understanding, and the spirit of the Bible animated many a desirous and devoted heart. It is not that the wisdom of experience was greater then than it is now, but it is that the wisdom of faith and piety was greater then than it is now, that we should so much ameliorate our present age by calling back the genius of the olden time. And did we but revert as before to the strict guidance and authority

of Revelation; did we, renouncing our own imaginations, make our submissive appeal to the Law and to the Testimony; did we only suffer the word of God to carry it at all times over the wayward fancies of men, and so recur to the apostolic humility, and the apostolic zeal, of former periods—this, this is what is meant in our text by the good old way.

In conclusion, let me now address you as members of the Church of Scotland, which in principle is essentially Protestant; and which, though like other churches it has its articles and its formularies of doctrine, yet wants no such discipleship as that which is grounded on blind submission to her authority—but only the discipleship of those, who in the free exercise of their judgment and their conscience, honestly believe her doctrine to be grounded on the authority of the word of God. Both her Catechism and Confession of faith have been given to the public with note and comment, it is true, but with note and comment that consist exclusively of Bible texts; and so, like apples of gold in pictures of silver, they offer a list of dogmata, but of dogmata set, as it were, or embossed in Scripture.

The natural depravity of man; his need both of a regeneration and of an atonement; the accomplishment of the one by the efficacy of a divine sacrifice, and of the other by the operation of a sanctifying spirit: the doctrine that a sinner is justified by faith, followed up, most earnestly and incessantly followed up, through the pulpits of our land, by the doctrine that he is judged by works; the righteousness of Christ as the alone foundation of his meritorious claim to heaven, but this followed up by his own personal righteousness as the indispensable preparation for heaven's exercises and heaven's joys; the free offer of pardon even to the chief of sinners, but this followed up by the practical calls of repentance, without which no orthodoxy can save him; the amplitude of the gospel invitations, and, in despite of all that has been so unintelligently said about our gloomy and relentless Calvanism, the wide and unexcepted amnesty that is held forth to every creature under heaven, so as that the message of reconciliation may be made to circulate round the globe, and the overtures of welcome and good will from the mercy seat above, be affectionately urged on all the individuals of all the families of earth below—these are the main credenda of a church that has oft been reproached for its hard and unfeeling theology—but nevertheless, a theology which, deeply seated as it still is in the affections of our peasantry, hath approved itself by their virtues and their general habits, to be, after all, the fittest basis on which to sustain the moral worth and the moral energies of the nation.

In adhering then to such a church and to such a creed, you adhere to what we have no hesitation in characterising as the good old way of your forefathers—not the less dear, we trust, to many of you, that you have now separated from that interesting land, and perhaps look back through the dim and distant recollection of many years, to the days of your cherished and well-taught boyhood. In this house of wider accommodation, a far larger number of our countrymen than before, can realize the services of a Scottish Sabbath. And, when we think of the constant accessions which are making to this number, and that too, by the yearly influx of exposed and unprotected youth into this vast metropolis, the moral importance of such an erection as the present rises above all computation. We cannot look indeed to those who have recently quitted the parental roof, and now in the open world are in the midst of its snares and its fearful exposures, without regarding it as the most affecting of all spectacles, when any one of them gives up the comparative innocence of his tender years, and thence passes into the hardihood and the knowing depravity of vice. In the whole compass of nature, there is not a wreck more lamentable, or which presents an object of more distressful contemplation, than does the ruin of youthful modesty. And the flower that withers upon its stalk, and all whose blushing graces have now vanished into the loathsomeness of vilest putrefaction, is but the faint emblem of so sad an overthrow. That indeed is one of the darkest transitions in the history of man, when he exchanges the simplicities of his early home for the riot, and the intemperance, and the daring excesses that are acted in haunts of profligacy—

when by the loud laugh of his forerunners in guilt, all his purposes of virtue are overborne; and he is at length tempted, among the urgencies and the contaminations of surrounding example, to cast his principle and his purity away from him. Be assured that, in the wild and lurid gleams of frantic dissipation, there is nought that can compensate for the calm, the beauteous lustre, which some have left behind you in the abode of domestic piety. And therefore, now that you have departed from the hallowed influences of an atmosphere so pure and so kindly, let me entreat you, by all the high interests which belong to you as immortal creatures, that you forget not the solemnity of a father's parting advice, that you forget not the tenderness of a mother's prayers.

One of the likeliest preservatives of conduct through the week, is a powerful religious application to the conscience upon the Sabbath. And we repeat it as matter of high gratulation to our Scottish families, that in a place so capacious as this, the lessons of Christianity are to be ministered according to the forms of our church, and by one of the most distinguished of her sons—a minister who has ever counted it a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but who is solemnized by the thought that He who judgeth him is God—a minister who combines with the utmost fearlessness for the creature, the utmost docility and reverence for the Creator,—one whose talents and whose colossal strength of mind could have borne him aloft to the most arduous heights of science, but who now holds it his more becoming, as indeed it is his more dignified part, to give himself wholly to the studies and the pursuits of sacredness,—one who is willing to spend and be spent for the eternity of his people, and who, after having survived the buffetings of a whole world of gainsayers, now sits down amongst you with the well-earned attachment of the thousands who know his worth, and who have been awakened by his ministry. His are not the short-lived triumphs of a mere popular empiricism, but the fairly won distinction of one who possesses the stamina of worth and endurance, being alike gifted with great principle, and with great power. But it is not distinction that he seeks; for intent upon higher objects, we trust the paramount aim of his spirit to be, not his own glory, but the glory of the master whom he serves; and that actuated by motives which the world can neither understand nor sympathise with, he has received of that grace from above, which is given only to the humble, and the want of which would stamp an utter impotency on the ablest and most splendid ministrations. If thus upholden, he has nothing to fear. Already have the outrages of a rude and licentious press broken their strength upon him, and are dissipated. And now that the fume, and the turbulence, and the uproar of this temporary warfare have been all cleared away, does he stand forth with a moral dignity on his part, and a warranted confidence upon yours, which, under God, are the best guarantees for the success of his future labours.

May the spirit of all grace abundantly strengthen and uphold him in the arduous office to which he has been called. May living water from the sanctuary above descend on the ministrations of the word here below; and both fertilizing the soil of your hearts, and fructifying the good seed which is deposited there, may you be made to abound in all the fruits of righteousness. May this House in future years be the scene of many sound and scriptural conversions; and never, till in the course of generations its walls have mouldered into decay, and its minarets have fallen, never may it cease either in our own day, or in the days of our children's children, to be a gate to Heaven, a place of busy and successful preparation for Heaven's exercises, and Heaven's joys.

SERMON XXXII.

The Effect of Man's Wrath in the Agitation of Religious Controversies.

"The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."—JAMES i. 20.

WITHOUT attempting, what we should feel to be impossible within the limits of one discourse, to expound the principle of our text in all its generality, we shall satisfy ourselves with adverting to but one or two special applications of it. We shall first consider the effect of man's wrath when interposed between the call of the gospel, and the minds of those to whom the gospel is addressed—and, secondly, consider the effect of man's wrath when interposed between a right and a wrong denomination of Christianity.

I. You are all aware of there being much wrathful controversy on the part of men relative to the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherein the righteousness of God is said, by the apostle, to be revealed from faith to faith. To understand the way in which this great message from heaven to earth may be darkened, and altogether transformed out of its native character, by the conflict and controversy of its interpreters, we ask you to conceive the effect, if a message of most free and unqualified kindness, from some earthly superior, were just to be handled in the same way. We may imagine that in his bosom, there is nought but the utmost good-will to us, in all its truth, and in all its tenderness; and that he sends forth the expression of it in writing, on purpose that we may read and may rejoice; and that if we but perused this precious document with the simplicity of children, we could not fail to be gladdened by the assurances of a love which shone most directly and most unequivocally from all its pages. But instead of this, we may further imagine, that between our minds and all the grace and goodness of this communication, there should spring up a whole army of expounders—and that in the pride, and the heat, and the bitterness of argument, they fell out among themselves—and that all were vastly too much engrossed, each with his own special understanding about the terms of the message, ever to meet together in harmony, and in mutual felicitation, on the broad and unquestionable truths of it. Is there no danger, we ask, amid the acerbities of such a thickening warfare, that men should lose sight of the mildness and the mercy that lay in that embassy of peace by which it had been stirred? Is it not a possible thing, that many an humble spirit, whom the soft and the kind affection of the original message might else have wakened into confidence, shall feel itself disturbed and bewildered in the fierce and the fiery agitations of such an atmosphere as this? When we hear from one quarter, that such is the import of the message, and that we shall forfeit all the beneficence which it proffers, unless we so understand it,—when, in vehement resistance to this, we hear of another import, and even denounced upon them who refuse it, the wrath of Him whose good-will is the whole burden of the now disputed communication,—when moreover a third, and a different interpretation, is listed against each of the two former, and supported with acrimony, and backed by the same menaces of a displeasure on the part of that universal friend, who had set himself forth in the benignest attitude, and lifted the widely-sounding call of reconciliation,—Certain it is, that when the mind of an inquirer is involved among these, it is occupied with topics of another description, and another character altogether, from that of the calm and the kind benevolence which resides at the fountain-head, and which would have radiated from thence on the hearts of a delighted people, were it not for the intervening turbulence that serves to hide, or at least to darken it. It is thus, that by the angry and the lowering passions of these middle men, an obscuration might be shed on all the good-

ness and the grace which sit on the brow of their superior; and that when stunned in the uproar of their sore controversy with the challenge, and the recrimination, and the boisterous assertion of victory, and all the other clamours of heated partizanship—that these might altogether drown the soft utterance of that clemency whereof they are the interpreters, and cause the gentler sounds that issue from some high seat of munificence and mercy to be altogether unheard.

Now, it is altogether worthy of our consideration, whether such might not be the effect of those manifold controversies that have risen, in regard to the terms and the truths of that gospel message which has come down from the sanctuary above to the men of our lower world. The love for mankind which resides in the bosom of the unseen and eternal God, is there most distinctly asserted; and there is also most full and frequent declaration of His willingness to receive us; and in every possible way of entreaty, and protestation, and kind encouragement, does He manifest the forth-puttings of His longing affection towards us; and, rather than not reclaim us hapless wanderers to that blessedness with Himself, from which we had so widely departed, He lavished all the resources both of His omnipotence and of His wisdom, on a scheme of reconciliation, by which even the guiltiest of offenders might draw nigh; and He sent the Son of His everlasting regards from Heaven to earth, who had to surrender all His glories, and to suffer all the vengeance of an outraged law, ere He could move away the obstructions which stood between sinners and the mercy-seat; and, after having thus laboriously framed a pathway of access to that throne of righteousness, which is now turned into a throne of grace, did he lift up a voice of invitation to walk in it—a voice so diffusive, that it may go abroad over all, and yet so pointed, that it singles out and specializes each of the human family; and now, with all the soul and sincerity of a Father's earnestness, does He ask, in the hearing of that world He has done so much to save, "What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it?" Such is the character of that direct, that primary demonstration, which has been made to us from heaven. Such the felt love for our species which is honestly and genuinely there; and well, we repeat, is it worthy of our full consideration, whether, across the dark, the troubled medium of human controversy, the sight of it is not tarnished to the eye—the sound of it, thus mingled with notes of harshest discord, is not lost upon the ear.

In one place, the gospel is called the ministration of righteousness—in another, the gift which it offers, is called the gift of righteousness; and they are said to possess or to receive the righteousness of God, who have laid their confident hold upon that offer. But while the direct view of a benignant and a beseeching God, as He urges the offer upon their acceptance, is so well fitted to charm them into confidence, is there nothing, we ask, in the din of this posterior and subordinate controversy, that is fitted to disturb it? Surely the noise that arises from the wars and the wranglings of earth, falls differently upon the hearing to that sweetest music which descended from the canopy that is over our heads, and which accompanied the declaration of good-will to us in heaven. And so, altogether, that theology which shines immediate from his Bible on the heart of the unlettered peasant, may come with altered expression and effect on the mind of the scholastic, after it has been transmuted into the theology of the portly and polemic folio. The Sun of Righteousness may shed a mild and beauteous lustre upon the one, which, to the eye of the other, is obscured in the turbulence of rolling vapours, in the lurid clouds of an angry and unsettled sky. It is precisely thus, we fear, that the dogmatism on the one hand, and the defiance upon the other, which are associated with the conflicts and the championship of our profession, may have dimmed, to the vision of those who are below, the face of the benign and the beautiful sanctuary above; and verily there is room for the question, whether, in this way too, we have not one exemplification of the text, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

When God beseeches us to be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus, there is placed before the mind one object of con-

templation. When man steps forward, and, in the pride or intolerance of orthodoxy, denounces the fury of an incensed God on all who put not faith in the merits and the mediation of His Son, there is placed before the mind another and a distinct object of contemplation. And just in proportion to the varieties of dogmatism or debate, will the mind shift and fluctuate from one contemplation to another. Certain it is, that it must feel a different sort of affection, when directly engaged with the love of God in heaven, from what it does when tost and alternated among the wrathful elements of human controversy upon earth. It then breathes in another atmosphere; and the whole sense and savour of the encompassing medium feel differently from before. And still it comes to the same important, but unhappy result, as if the music of the spheres had been drowned in the rude and resentful outcry of noises from beneath, and the ear had failed to catch the utterance of Heaven's inspiration, because lost and overborne amid sounds of earthliness. It is thus that the native character of Heaven's embassy may at length be shrouded in subtle, but most effectual disguise, from the souls of men; and the whole spirit and design of its munificent Sovereign be wholly misconceived by His sinful, yet much-loved children. We interpret the Deity by the hard and imperious scowl which sits on the countenance of angry theologians; and in the strife and clamour of their fierce animosities, we forget the aspect of Him who is upon the throne, the bland and benignant aspect of that God who waiteth to be gracious.

It is thus that men of highest respect in the Christian world have done grievous injury to the cause. Whether, we ask, would Calvin have found readier acceptance for his own favourite doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, (that only righteousness which God will accept in plea of our meritorious claim to the kingdom of heaven, and therefore called the righteousness of God,)—whether was it likelier that he should have gained the consent of men's minds to this method of salvation, by declaring it in the spirit of gentleness, and with the accents of entreaty, or by denouncing it in the spirit of an incensed polemic, and with that aspect which sits on his pages of severe and relentless dogmatism? Would it not have strengthened his cause, had he, in propounding the message of reconciliation to his fellows upon earth, caught more upon his heart of the benignity which prompted the sending of that message from heaven?—and had the eye, the voice, the manner of this able expounder of the counsels of God represented more of the kindness which presided over these counsels, of the compassion felt in the upper sanctuary, and which there originated the forth-going of the Saviour on our guilty world? Certain it is, that there is nought to conciliate the spirits of men to the doctrine of Calvin, all true, and all momentous as it is, in that wrath which glares upon us so repeatedly from the dark and angry passages of his argument. That violence and vituperation, by which his Institutes are so frequently deformed, never do occur, we venture to affirm, but with an adverse influence on the minds of his readers, in reference to the truth which he espouses. In other words, that truth which, when couched in the language, and accompanied with the calls of affection, finds such welcome into the hearts of men, hath brought upon its propounders the reaction of stout indignant hostility, and just because of the stern intolerance wherewith it has been proposed by them. This difference, in point of effect, between the meek and the magisterial style of instruction, makes it of the utmost practical importance, that neither the pride nor the passions of men should mingle in the discussion, when labouring either with or against each other in the common pursuit of truth. For much has it prejudiced the cause of truth in the world, that it has so oft been urged and insisted on with that wrath of man, which, most assuredly, worketh not the righteousness of God.

And, though not strictly under our present head of discourse, there is one observation more which we feel it of importance to make, ere we pass on to the next division of our subject. Apart from the transforming effect of human wrath to give another hue, as it were, to the complexion of the Godhead, and another expression than that of its own native kindness, to the message which has pro-

ceeded from Him, there is a distinct operation in the mind of an inquirer after religious truth, which is altogether worthy of being adverted to.

When the controversialist makes an angry demand upon us for our belief in some one of his positions, why, that position may be the offered and the gratuitous mercy of God in heaven, and yet the whole charm of such a proposal may be dissipated, just through that tone and temper of intolerance in which it is expounded to us upon earth. When entertained in the shape of a direct announcement from the Father of mercies himself it comes with a wholly different impression upon the heart from what it does when entertained in the shape of an article that has been fashioned by a system-builder and then fulminated against us by the hand of human combatants. All that hope and that happiness which might else have beamed from the doctrine of grace, and that instantly, upon the soul, may, as it were, be neutralized by the passionate and peremptory style of menace, wherewith faith in that doctrine is insisted upon. This we have already considered; yet it must not be overlooked, that even for the hope and the happiness, faith is indispensable—that ere we can rejoice in any truth, or take the salutary impression of it upon our hearts, the truth must be believed in; and, indeed, the Bible itself accompanies its statements of doctrine with the exaction of our faith in them. Without this faith in their reality, we can have no benefit from the objects of revelation. Faith is the avenue through which they come into contact with the inner man, and by which alone they can obtain an influence over the affections. It is not to be wondered at, then, that possessing, as it does, such vital importance, they who are in earnest after their salvation, should set such extreme value on the acquisition of faith. It is to them the pearl of great price. If, under the economy of the Law, men staked their eternity upon their works—under the economy of the Gospel, they stake their eternity upon their faith. The longings and the labourings of their hearts are now as much after the right belief, as formerly they were after the right obedience. And if while, "Do this and live," was the reigning principle of Heaven's administration, the natural anxiety for every expectant of Heaven, was to do properly—now that the reigning principle is, "Believe and be saved," it is just as natural that it should be his intense and his unceasing anxiety to believe properly.

Now, observe the misdirection of which he is consequently in danger. It is apt to turn away his attention from the object of faith, to the act of faith. If faith be any where, it is in the mind, which is its proper habitation, its place of occupancy and settlement; and when he wants to ascertain the reality of his faith, it is indeed most natural that he should go in quest of the precious article through the secrecies of his dwelling-place. In other words, he looks inwardly, instead of outwardly. In place of gazing abroad among the objects of Revelation, and gathering from thence of that direct radiance which they might have streamed upon his soul, he seeks for the reflection of these objects within the soul itself; and, while so employed, his inverted eye shuts out all the illumination that is above him and around him. It is not by looking inwardly upon the eye's own retina, but by looking openly and outwardly on the panorama of external nature, that we see the glories of the summer landscape. It is not by casting a downward regard on the tablet of vision, but by casting an upward regard on the starry firmament, that the wonders of the midnight sky become manifest to the beholder. And it is not, let it ever be remembered, it is not by a painful, by a probing scrutiny amongst the mysteries or the metaphysics of the inner man, that we admit the light of heaven into the soul. The peace and the joy of a believer do not spring from the traces which he finds to be within him. They emanate and they descend upon his heart, from the truths which are suspended over him. The work of faith consists not in looking to himself, but in looking to the reconciled countenance of God. He fetches its gladdening assurances, not from any light that has been struck out among the arcana of his own spirit, but from that great fountain of light, the Sun of Righteousness—the spiritual luminary which has arisen to the view of a sinful world, that every one who looketh may be

saved. If you invert this order, if you look into yourself, without looking unto Jesus, then you suspend the exercise of faith at the very time that you are trying to make sure of its existence. You look the wrong way; and if by the former influence, even that of man's wrath interposed between you and God's kindness, you were disturbed out of confidence and of comfort—by the present influence you are at least distracted away from them, even because the eye of the mind, when inverted upon itself, is averted from the proper object of confidence.

Let us never cease then the presentation of the object before you; and, when visited by fears, whether in looking to one's own heart, and finding nought but darkness and destitution there; or on looking to the countenance of our fellow men, and beholding the menace and intolerance which are depicted there; let all be overborne by a direct view of the kindness of God. Let us lift ourselves above these turbid elements of earth, and be firmly and erectly confident of benevolence in Heaven. The good-will that is here towards the children of men, the joy that is felt there over every sinner who repenteth, the mild radiance there of the upper sanctuary, and the grace and the benignity which invest its glorious mercy-seat—these are the things which be above—these the stable realities of that place where God sitteth on His throne, and where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Yonder is the region of light and of undoubted love; and, whatever the mists or the obstructions may be of this lower world, there is welcome, free, generous, unbounded welcome to one and all in the courts of the Eternal. The sun of our firmament is still as gorgeously seated in fields of ethereal beauty and radiance as ever, when veiled from the sight of mortals by the lowering sky that is underneath. And so of the shrouded character of the Godhead, who, all placid and serene in the midst of elevation, is often mantled from human eye by the turbulence and the terror of those clouds which gather on the face of our spiritual hemisphere. The unchangeableness of that Deity, whose compassions fail not—the constituted Mediator, who is the same to-day, and yesterday, and for ever—the promises, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus our Lord—the word of revelation whereof it has been said, that heaven and earth shall pass away ere it can pass away—These are the enduring, the unextinguishable lights in the palace of our mild and munificent Sovereign, and in which all of us are called upon to rejoice. There may be no comfort to draw up from the darkling recesses of our own spirits; but surely it may descend upon us in floods of brightness and beauty from a canopy so glorious. There may be nought to gladden, in the wrathful and the warring controversies of the men who stand betwixt us and heaven; but in heaven itself there are notes of sweeter and kinder melody, and wel may we assure ourselves in the gratulation that is awakened there over every sinner who turns unto God.

We are aware, all the time, that the truth, as it is in Jesus, must be sustained by argument—that this is one of the offices of the church militant upon earth, whose part it is to silence gainsayers; and not only to contend, but to contend earnestly, for the faith which was delivered unto the saints. For this service, we stand deeply indebted to the lore and the laborious authorship of other days—to the prowess of those dauntless theologians, those gigantic men of war, who, skilled alike in the mysteries of the Bible, and in the mysteries of our common nature, have, in the vast and venerable productions which they left behind them, reared such bulwarks around the system of a sound and a settled orthodoxy, as have never yet been stormed. Yet the most prominent article of that system—that which Luther denominated the test of a standing or a falling church—even the doctrine of imputed righteousness by faith—although argument be the weapon by which to defend it against the inroad of adversaries, it is not the weapon of penetration or of power by which to force a way for its saving reception into the heart of a believer. It is not in the clangour of arms, or in the shouts of victory, or in the heat and hurry of most successful gladiatorship—it is not thus that this overture of peace and pardon from heaven falls with efficacy upon the sinner's ear. It is not so

much in the act of intellectually proving the truth of the doctrine, as in the act of proceeding upon its truth, when we affectionately urge the sinner to make it the stepping-stone of his return to God —it is then most generally that it becomes manifest unto his conscience, and that he receives in love that which in the spirit of love and kindness has been offered to him. In a word, it is when the bearer of this message of God to man, urges it upon his fellow-sinners in the very spirit which first prompted that message from the upper sanctuary—it is when he truly represents, not alone the contents of Heaven's overtures, but also that heavenly kindness by which they were suggested—it is when he entreats rather than when he denounces, and when that compassion, which is in the heart of the Godhead, actuates his own —it is when standing in the character of an ambassador from Him who so loved the world, he accompanies the delivery of his message with the looks and the language of his own manifest tenderness —it is then that the preacher of salvation is upon his best vantage-ground of command over the hearts of a willing people; and when he finds that charity, and prayer and moral earnestness have done what neither lordly intolerance nor even lordly argument could have done, it is then that he rejoices in the beautiful experience, that it is something else than the wrath of man which is the instrument of working the righteousness of God.

The apostle says, "covet earnestly the best gifts," and then adds, "but yet I show you a more excellent way"—even the way of charity. We are also bidden "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." But notwithstanding, there may be a still more excellent and effectual way, even to "speak the truth in love." It is thus that the gospel, sometimes in one passage, blends firmness of principle with the gentleness of kind affection, towards those who are its adversaries. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." "Now we exhort you brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded; support the weak, be patient towards all men. See that none may render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." The vehemence of passion is one thing. The vehemence of sentiment is another. There is a hatefulness in the first. There is a certain nobleness to be liked and admired in the second. The former vents itself in malice against the heretic. The latter urges and assails the heresy. The strength of irritation is wholly different from the strength of conviction; and a deep sensation of the importance of truth is wholly different from the strength of conviction; and a deep sensation of the importance of truth, is wholly different from a sensitive dislike towards him who resists or disowns it. The Bible makes the discrimination between these two; and it tells us to shun the one, and to crush the other to the uttermost. Under its guidance, we shall know both how to maintain an unyielding front of resistance to the error, and yet to have compassion and courtesy for him who is the victim of it. It is a triumph to conquer by the power of argument—but it is a greater triumph to conciliate and convert by the power of charity.

II. But this brings me to the second head of discourse, under which I shall now, very shortly, consider the effect of man's wrath, when interposed between a right and a wrong denomination of Christianity.

It can require no very deep insight into our nature to perceive, that when there is proud or angry intolerance on the side of truth, it must call forth the reaction of a sullen and determined obstinacy on the other side of error. Men will submit to be reasoned out of an opinion, and more especially when treated with respect and kindness. But they will not submit to be cavalierly driven out of it. There is a revolt in the human spirit against contempt and contumely, insomuch that the soundest cause is sure to suffer from the help of some auxiliaries. When passion is enlisted on one side of a contr

versy, when provocation is awakened on the other side,—and the parties erecting themselves into stouter and loftier attitude than before, stand to each other in respective positions which are mutually impregnable. It is this infusion of temper by which the force even of mighty argument is paralyzed. It is when disdain meets with defiance, when exasperating charges meet with indignant recriminations, when the shouts of exulting victory may sting the bosom of adversaries with the humiliations, but never draw from their lips the acknowledgments of defeat,—it is when the war of words is animated with feelings such as these, that Truth, whose still small voice is all-powerful, falls from her omnipotence and her glory; and Falsehood, resolute in the midst of such stormy agitations, is only riveted thereby more firmly upon her basis. To the perversity of human error, there is now superadded the still more hopeless perversity of human wilfulness—and on looking at the whole resulting amount from these fulminations of heated partisanship, one cannot fail to acknowledge, that indeed the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Nevertheless, it is the part of man, both to adopt and to advocate the truth, lifting his zealous testimony in its favour. Yet there is surely a way of doing this in the spirit of charity; and while strenuous, while even uncompromising in the argument, it is possible surely to observe all the amenities of gentleness and good-will in these battles of the faith. For example, it is not wrong to feel either the strength or the importance of our cause, when we plead the Godhead of the Saviour; when, in affirming this to be an article of our creed, we simply repeat a statement of Scripture, as distinct and absolute as it is in the power of vocables to make it; even that "the Word was God;" when, after that a sound erudition hath pronounced the integrity of this one passage, we should deem it a waste and a perversion of criticism, to suspend our belief, till we had adjusted all the merits of all the controversies on other and more ambiguous passages; when after being satisfied that the Bible is indeed the record of an authentic communication from Heaven to earth, we put faith in this its clearest utterance, than which it is not within the compass of human language to frame a more unequivocal, or a more definite; when contrasting the ignorance of a creature so beset and limited as man, with the amplitude of that infinite and everlasting light, from the confines of which the message of revelation hath broke upon our world, we count it our becoming attitude to listen to all its announcements even as with the docility of little children; when, more especially, in profoundest darkness as we are, about the nature or the constitution of the Deity, who, throned in the mystery of His unfathomable essence, pervades all space, and without beginning or without end, unites in His wondrous Being the extremes of eternity, we hold that one information of Himself, and from His own authoritative voice, should rebuke and bid away all human imaginations; when placed, as we are, in but a corner of that immensity which He hath peopled with innumerable worlds, with nought to instruct us but the experience of our little day, and nought to guide our way to that region of invisibles which is all His own —we, surrendering each fond and favourite preconception of ours, defer to the teaching of Him, who is Himself the fountain-head of existence, and whose eye reaches to the furthest outskirts of the universe that He has formed. And should He but tell of Him who has made flesh, that He was in the beginning with God, and that He was God, surely on a theme so vastly above us and beyond us, it is for us to regulate our belief by the very letter of this communication; and on the basis of such an evidence as this, to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, is the soundest philosophy, as well as the soundest faith.

Yet with all these reasons for holding ourselves to be intellectually right upon this question, there is not one reason why the wrath of man should be permitted to mingle in the controversy. This, whenever it is admitted, operates not as an ingredient of strength, but as an ingredient of weakness. Let Truth be shrined in argument—for this is its appropriate glory. And it is a sore disparagement inflicted upon it by the hand of vindictive theologians, when, instead of this, it is shrined in anathema, or brandished as a

weapon of dread and of destruction over the heads of all who are compelled to do it homage. The terrible denunciations of Athanasius have not helped—they have injured the cause. The Godhead of Christ is not thus set forth in the New Testament. It is nowhere proposed in the shape of a mere dictatorial article, or as a naked dogma, for the understanding alone; and at one place it is introduced as an episode for the enforcement of a moral virtue. In this famous passage, the practical lesson occupies the station of principal, as the main or capital figure of the piece; and the doctrine on which so many would effervesce all their zeal, even to exhaustion, stands to it but in the relation of a subsidiary. The lesson is, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." And the doctrine, (here noticed by the Apostle, not to the end that he may rectify the opinion of his disciples, but primarily and obviously, to the end that he may rectify their conduct) the doctrine for the enforcement of the lesson is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In these verses there is a collateral lesson for our faith; but the chief, the direct lesson, is a lesson of charity, which is greater than faith. And would the heart of Trinitarian be but as obediently schooled as his head, by this passage—would Orthodoxy, instead of the strife and the vain-glory which have given her so revolting an aspect, both of pride and sternness, but put on her bowels of mercy, and to her truth add tenderness—would the champions of a Saviour's dignity but learn of His meekness and lowliness, and, while they assert Him to be God manifest in the flesh, meet the perversity of gain-sayers in the very spirit of gentleness that He did,—This were the way by which the Church militant might be borne onwardly and upwardly to the station of the Church triumphant in the world. This is the way in which, by the mechanism of our moral nature, to obtain ascendancy over the hearts of men. Truth will be indebted for her best victories, not to the overthrow of Heresy, discomfited on the field of argument, but to the surrender of Heresy, disarmed of that in which her strength and her stability lie, —of her passionate, because provoked, wilfulness. Charity will do what reason cannot do. It will take that which letteth out of the way—even that wrath of man, which worketh neither the truth nor the righteousness of God.

But our time does not permit of any further illustration—else we might have shown at greater length, how, by the oversight of this great principle, the cause both of truth and of righteousness has been impeded in the world. Theologians have forgotten it in their controversies. Statesmen have forgotten it in their laws. Never was there a greater blunder in legislation, than that by which the forces of the statute-book have been enlisted on the side of truth; and error, as was quite natural, instead of being subdued, has been thereby settled down into tenfold obstinacy. The glories of martyrdom have been transferred from the right to the wrong side of the question; and superstition, which, in a land of perfect light and perfect liberty, would hide her head as ashamed, gathers a title to respect, and stands forth in a character of moral heroism, because of the injustice which has been brought to bear upon her. She ought, in all wisdom, to have been left to her own natural decay—or, at least, reason and kindness are the only engines which should have been made to play upon her strong-holds. But with such an auxiliary as the mere authority of terror upon the one side, and such a resistance as that of generous and high-minded indignation upon the other—there have arisen the elements of an interminable warfare. And not till truth, relieved of so unseemly an associate, be confined to the use of her proper weapons, will she be reinstated on her proper vantage-ground. It is not in the fermentation of human passions and human politics, that the lessons of heaven can be with efficacy taught—and ere these les-

sons shall go abroad in triumph over the length and breadth of the land, we must recall the impolicy by which we have turned a whole people into a nation of outcasts. To exclude is surely not the way to assimilate. It is by pervading, instead of separating into an unbroken mass, and then placing it off at a distance from us—it is by extensively mingling with the men of another denomination, in all the walks of civil and political business—it is then, that the occasions of converse and of courtesy will be indefinitely multiplied—and then will it be found, that it is by an influence altogether opposite to the wrath of man, that we are enabled to work the righteousness of God.

But let us not make entrance on a field, to the verge of which we have now been conducted by the light of a principle that is abundantly capable of shedding most beautiful, as well as most beneficent illustration over the whole of it. Let us rather conclude with the application of our text, not to the affairs of an empire, or the affairs of a church, but rather to the affairs of a single congregation. Let us recur, though but for one moment, ere we shall have brought our address to its close, to that spirit of kindness and good-will, which prompted the original formation of the gospel message in the upper sanctuary, as being indeed the very spirit by which the expounder of that message ought to be actuated. He may have at times to engage in conflict with the infidels or the heretics around him. Nevertheless, let him be assured, that it is by other armour than that which is wielded on the field of controversy—by an influence more powerful still, than even that of overbearing argument, by the moral and affectionate earnestness of a heart that breathes the very charity and tenderness of heaven upon his audience,—it is thus that ministerial work is done most prosperously—the work of winning souls, of turning sons and daughters unto righteousness.

It is not so easy as may be thought, to dislodge the fears, or to win the confidence of nature in him who is nature's God. There is a certain overhanging sense of guilt, which forms the main ingredient of this alienation. It is this which darkens, to the eye of our world, the face of Heaven's Lawgiver; and brings such a burden of dread and of distrust on the spirit of man, that he feels nothing to invite, but to repel and overawe, in the thought of Heaven's high sacredness. It is thus that the aspect of the Divinity is mantled and overshaded to the human imagination; and instead of reading there the signals of welcome and good-will, we figure to ourselves a God dwelling in some awful and august sanctuary, or seated on a throne whence the fire of jealousy goeth forth to burn up and to destroy. It is sin which has laid this cold, this heavy obstruction, on the hearts of our outcast species. There is a strong, though secret, apprehension of displeasure in the countenance of Him who is above, which haunts us continually, and gives us the hourly, the habitual, feeling of outcasts. Man recoils to a distance from God, and regards God as placed at an inaccessible distance from him. There is between them a gulph of separation, across which man looks with disquietude and dismay, as he would to some spectral or portentous image shrouded in mystery, and all the more tremendous that he is invisible and unknown. The greatest moral revolution which the spirit of man undergoes, is when these clouds which overhang the hemisphere of his spiritual vision are all cleared away, and the Godhead shines upon him with a new and an opposite manifestation—when simply, because now seeing the Deity under an aspect of graciousness, he, instead of trembling before Him as an enemy, can securely trust in Him as a friend, and can rejoice in that Being of whom he has been made to know and to believe that He rejoices over him, to bless him and to do him good.

Now, it is by faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by it alone, that this great revolution is achieved. It is through the open door of His mediatorship, that the sinner draws nigh, and beholds God as a reconciled Father. It is because of that blood of atonement, wherewith the mercy-seat on high is sprinkled, that he is made to hear the voice of welcome and of good-will which issues therefrom. He now beholds no severity in the aspect of the Lawgiver; and yet, through the work of Him by whom the law was magnified, he there beholds the harmony of all the attributes. Such is the exquisite skil

fulness of the economy under which we sit, that the truth, and the justice, and the holiness, which out of Christ were leagued against us for destruction—now that these have emerged, in vindicated lustre, from that hour of darkness, when the Saviour bowed down his head unto the sacrifice, they are the guarantees of pardon and acceptance to all who lay hold of this great salvation. It was in love to man that this wondrous dispensation was framed. It was kindness, honest, heart-felt, compassionate kindness, that formed the moving principle of the embassy from heaven to our world. We protest, by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, by the tears of Him who wept at Lazarus' tomb, and over the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, by every word of blessing that He uttered, and by every footstep of this wondrous visitor over the surface of a land on which he went about doing good continually,—we protest in the name of all these unequivocal demonstrations, that they do Him an injustice who propound this message in any other way than as a message of friendship to our species. He came not to condemn, but to save; not to destroy, but to keep alive. And he is the fittest bearer, he the best interpreter, of these overtures from above, who urges them upon men, not with wrath, and clamour, and controversial bitterness, but in the very spirit of that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated, and full of mercy.

In this way the moral power of the truth is superadded to its argumentative power. The kind affection of the speaker becomes an element of weight and influence in the demonstration which falls from him. He does more than barely utter the realities of the gospel—he pictures them forth in the persuasiveness of his own accents, in the looks as well as the language of his own manifested tenderness. He is the right person for standing between a people and heaven—seeing that Heaven's love to men is expressed visibly in his own countenance, audibly in the earnestness of his own voice. With a heart glowing in charity to his hearers, he is the fit representative, the best expounder, of that embassy, which has come from the dwelling-place of the Eternal on an errand of charity to our world. And fraught as he is with the tidings of mercy, it is not more when he urges the truth, than when he affectingly sets forth the tenderness of these tidings, that he charms the acquiescence of men, and his message is felt to be "worthy of all acceptation."

Before I leave you, I should like, even though at the end of our discourse, and by an informal resumption of its first topic, to possess the heart of each who now hears me with the distinct assurance of God's proffered good-will to him, of His free and full pardon stretched out for the acceptance of him. If heretofore you have been in the habit of contemplating the gospel as at a sort of speculative distance, and in its generality, I want you now to feel the force of its pointed, its personal application, and to understand it as a message addressed specifically to you. The message has been so framed, and couched in phraseology of such peculiar import, that it knocks for entrance at every heart, and is laid down for acceptance at every door. It is true, that you are not named and surnamed in the Bible; but the term "whosoever," associated, as it frequently is, with the offer of its blessings, points that offer to each and to all of you. "Whosoever will, let him drink of the waters of life freely." It is very true that this written communication has not been handed to you, like the letter of a distant acquaintance, with the address of your designation and dwelling-place inscribed upon it. But the term "all," as good as specializes the address to each, and each has a full warrant to proceed upon the call, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved;" or, "Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is furthermore true, that Christ has not appeared in person at any of your assemblies, and, singling out this one individual, and that other, has bid him step forward with an application for pardon, on the assurance that he would receive it;—but the term "every" singles out each; and He has left behind Him the precious, the unexcepted declaration, that "every one who asketh receiveth," that "every one who seeketh findeth." And lastly, it is true that He disperses no special messengers of His grace to special individuals; but the

term "any," though occupying but its own little room in a single text, has a force equally dispersive with as many messengers sent to the world as there are men upon its surface. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." These are the words which, unlike the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, turn every way, carrying the message of salvation diffusively abroad among all, and pointing it distinctively to each of the human family. Their scope is wide as the species, and their application is to every individual thereof. And what I want each individual present to understand, is, that God in the gospel beseeches him to be reconciled—God is saying unto him, "Turn thou, turn thou, why wilt thou die?"

There are certain generic words attached at times to the overtures of the gospel, which have the same twofold power of spreading abroad these overtures generally among all, yet of pointing them singly at each of the human family. The "world," for example, is a word of this import; and Jesus Christ is declared to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. After this, man, though an inhabitant of the world, and, as such, fairly within the scope of this communication, may continue to forbid himself, but most assuredly God has not forbidden him. The term "sinner" is another example, as being comprehensive of a genus, whereof each individual may appropriate the benefits that are said in Scripture to be intended for the whole. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." Still it is posssible, as before, that many a sinner may not hold this saying to be worthy, or, at least, may not make it the subject of his acceptation. His demand perhaps is, that, ere he can have a warrantable confidence in this saying for himself, he must be specially, and by name, included in it; whereas the truth is, that to warrant his distrust, his want of confidence after such a saying, he should be specially, and by name, excluded from it. After an utterance like this, instead of needing, as a sufficient reason of dependence, to be made the subject of a particular invitation, he would really need, as a sufficient reason of despondency, to be made the subject of a particular exception. Is not the characteristic term, "sinner," sufficiently descriptive of him? as much so, indeed, as if he had been named and surnamed in Scripture. Does it not mark him as an object for all those announcements which bear on sinners, as such, or sinners generally? The truth is, if we but understood the terms of this great act of amnesty, and made the legitimate application of them, we should perceive that, to whomsoever the word of salvation has come, to him the offer of salvation has been made—that he is really as welcome to all the blessings of the New Testament, as if he had been the only creature in the universe who stood in need of them; as if he had been the only sinner of all the myriads of beings whom God hath formed; and as if to reclaim him, and to prevent the moral harmony of creation from being stained or interrupted by even so much as one solitary exception, for him alone the costly apparatus of redemption had been reared, and Christ had died, that God might be to him individually both a just God and a Saviour.

SERMON XXXIII.

On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Thompson.

"He being dead yet speaketh."—HEBREWS xi. 4.

THERE is one sense in which this text admits the utmost generality of application. Every man who dies, speaks a lesson to survivors—even that lesson which is the oftenest told, but which is also the oftenest forgotten. There is on this subject a cleaving and a constitutional earthliness, which stands its ground against every demonstration—giving way, for a moment perhaps, at each of the successive instances, but recovering itself on the instant when the scenes, and the companionships and the business of the world again close around us. We are the creatures of sense, and the present, the sensible world is the only one that we practically acknowledge. Carnality is the scriptural term for this disease of fallen humanity—a disease of marvellous inveteracy and force; and not to be dislodged, we fear, by any assault whatever, whether ordinary or extraordinary, on the mere sensibilities of nature. We are never more assured, than to translate a man from the walk of sight to the walk of faith, is a work of supernatural energy, than when we witness the impotency of all natural appliances; and how the spell which binds him to the world is not to be broken by the loudest and most emphatic warnings of the world's vanity. A rooted preference of the interests of time to the interests of eternity—this is what arithmetic may disprove, but it is what arithmetic cannot dissipate. This is what the pathos and power of some affecting visitation may suspend, but which no visitation can ultimately quell; and after a brief season of sighs, and sensibilities, and tears, the man emerges again to as whole-hearted a secularity as before. Thus it is, that the thousand funerals which from childhood to age he may have attended, have only cradled him into a profounder spiritual lethargy; and that the frequent wrecks of mortality, through which he has ploughed his way on the ocean of life, have only stamped a sort of weather-beaten hardihood upon his soul. The man is more and more seasoned, as it were, by every repetition of death, against its terrors, till, at last, himself dies in deep and hopeless apathy.

Such, we fear, is mainly the sad history of the world throughout its successive generations. Such is the infatuation of men walking in a vain show; and only more confirmed, by every instance of death, in false and fatal security. There is no question it ought to be otherwise. Every partaker of our nature who dies, should impressively remind us of our own mortality. Every exemplification of the unsparing and universal law, should be borne homeward in pointed and personal application to ourselves. There is not a human creature, however insignificant, who, simply by the act of expiring, should not speak to us in accents of deepest seriousness; and tell, with an eloquence not to be resisted, of our own approaching end, our own sudden arrest, or dying agonies. All the tokens and mementoes of death should have this effect upon us—as every funeral bell, every open grave, every procession that day after day moves along our streets, and scarcely arrests the eye of the heedless passenger. Nor is it necessary that he should be a man of rank, or talents, or commanding influence, or wide and general popularity, who is thus borne along. Enough, if he be flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. The humblest of menials is fitted to be our monitor on such an occasion. Even he when dead speaketh; and if he do not effectually convince, he will at least most emphatically condemn.

I need not say, to this assembly of mourners, in what more striking and impressive form the lesson has been given to us. It is just as if death had wanted to make the highest demonstration of his

sovereignty, and for this purpose had selected as his mark, him who stood the foremost, and the most conspicuous in the view of his countrymen. I speak not at present of any of the relations in which he stood to the living society immediately around him—to the thousands in church whom his well-known voice reached upon the Sabbath—to the tens of thousands in the city, whom, through the week, in the varied rounds and meetings of Christian philanthropy, he either guided by his counsel, or stimulated by his eloquence. You know, over and above, how far the wide, and the wakeful, and the untired benevolence of his nature carried him; and that, in the labours, and the locomotions connected with these, he may be said to have become the personal acquaintance of the people of Scotland. Insomuch, that there is not a village in the land, where the tidings of his death have not conveyed the information that a master in Israel has fallen; and I may also add, that such was the charm of his companionship, such the cordiality lighted up by his presence in every household, that, connected with this death, there is, at this moment, an oppressive sadness in the hearts of many thousands even of our most distant Scottish families. And so, a national lesson has been given forth by this event, even as a national loss has been incurred by it. It is a public death in the view of many spectators. And when one thinks of the vital energy by which every deed and every utterance were pervaded—of that prodigious strength which but gamboled with the difficulties that would have so depressed and overborne other men—of that prowess in conflict, and that promptitude in counsel with his fellows—of that elastic buoyancy which ever rose with the occasion, and bore him onward and upward to the successful termination of his cause—of the weight and multiplicity of his engagements; and yet, as if nothing could overwork that colossal mind, and that robust framework, the perfect lightness and facility wherewith all was executed,—when one thinks, in the midst of these powers and these performances, how intensely he laboured, I had almost said, how intensely he lived, in the midst of us, we cannot but acknowledge, that death, in seizing upon him, hath made full proof of a mastery that sets all the might and all the promise of humanity at defiance.

But while in no possible way could general society have, through means of but one individual example, been more impressively told of the power of death—to you, in particular, it is a letter of deepest pathos. The world at large can form no estimate of the tenderness which belongs to the spiritual relationship, though I trust that on this topic, mysterious to them, yet familiar, I hope and believe, to many of you, I now speak to a goodly number who can own him as their spiritual father. But even they who are strangers to the power and reality of these things may comprehend the growing attachment of hearers to the minister, who, Sabbath after Sabbath, imparts to them of his own mental wealth, and excites in them somewhat of his own moral and religious earnestness. Even, apart from all personal acquaintance or intercourse, a sympathy with the personal ministrations of the clergymen under whom you sit, often draws a very close and binding affinity along with it. The man, with the very tones of whose voice you associate many of your most pleasing and hallowed recollections—the man to whom you feel yourselves indebted for the most delightful Sabbaths of other days—he who guided your devotions, and cleared away your difficulties, and pointed your path to heaven, and first opened the method of salvation, and by his expostulations and his arguments, was the instrument of determining you to forsake all, and follow after Christ,—every Christian can tell that to that man there attaches an interest of no ordinary tenderness and force. Even a general and unconverted hearer may share in this affection—although only his understanding was regaled by the pulpit demonstration; or his imagination by its splendour and eloquence; or his conscience, so far impressed, as at least to recognise the general truth of the principles, and the perfect moral honesty and earnestness of him who urges and expounds them. The man who is frank and fearless, and able, and, above all, whose heart was fully charged with what may be called, the brotherhood of our nature; whose every look and utterance bespoke the strength of his own

convictions, and the intensity of his zeal to plant them in the bosoms of other men, —that man would, in the course of months, or of years, become the general friend of the multitude whom he addresses; apart from all separate converse and fellowship with the individuals who compose it. Though only the pulpit acquaintance, and not at all the personal of the many hundreds who listen to him, yet in this capacity alone might obtain a mighty hold of their affections notwithstanding. At once the soul and mouth of the congregation, he is on high vantage-ground for such an ascendancy. He speaks as it were, from a pre-eminence, and, having all the moral forces of the gospel at command, it is incalculable with what sure and general effect, a minister, even of ordinary talents, if but of acknowledged honesty and worth, can subdue the people under him. But his was no ordinary championship; and although the weapons of our spiritual warfare are the same in every hand, we all know that there was none who wielded them more vigorously than he did, or who, with such an arm of might, and voice of resistless energy, carried, as if by storm, the convictions of his people. That such an arm should now be motionless, that such a voice should be for ever hushed in deep and unbroken silence, is to all a thought of profoundest melancholy. But he was the special property of his hearers, and to them it comes far more urgently and impressively home, than does any general object of touching or tragic contemplation. To them it is a personal bereavement,—and whether or not on the terms with him of individual converse, they droop and are in heaviness, because of their now widowed Sabbaths, their bereft and desolated sanctuary.

But the lesson is prodigiously enhanced, when we pass from his pulpit to his household ministrations. I perhaps do him wrong, in supposing that any large proportion of his hearers did not know him personally—for such was his matchless superiority to fatigue, such the unconquerable strength and activity of his nature, that he may almost be said to have accomplished a sort of personal ubiquity among his people. But ere you can appreciate the whole effect of this, let me advert to a principle of very extensive operation in nature. Painters know it well. They are aware, how much it adds to the force and beauty of any representation of theirs, when made strikingly and properly to contrast with the back-ground on which it is projected. And the same is as true of direct nature, set forth in one of her own immediate scenes, as of reflex nature, set forth by the imagination and pencil of an artist. This is often exemplified in those Alpine wilds, where beauty may, at times, be seen embosomed in the lap of grandeur, —as when, at the base of a lofty precipice, some spot of verdure, or peaceful cottage-home, seems to smile in more intense loveliness, because of the towering strength and magnificence which are behind it. Apply this to the character, and think how precisely analogous the effect is—when, from the ground-work of a character, that, mainly, in its texture and general aspect, is masculine, there do effloresce the forth-puttings of a softer nature, and those gentler charities of the heart, which come out irradiated in tenfold beauty, when they arise from a substratum of moral strength and grandeur underneath. It is thus, when the man of strength shows himself the man of tenderness; and he who, sturdy and impregnable in every righteous cause, makes his graceful descent to the ordinary companionships of life, is found to mingle, with kindred warmth, in all the cares and the sympathies of his fellowmen. Such, I am sure, is the touching recollection of very many who now hear me, and who can tell, in their own experience, that the vigour of his pulpit, was only equalled by the fidelity and the tenderness of his household ministrations. They understand the whole force and significancy of the contrast I have now been speaking of—when the pastor of the church becomes the pastor of the family; and he who, in the crowded assembly, held imperial sway over every understanding, entered some parent's lowly dwelling, and prayed and wept along with them over their infant's dying bed. It is on occasions like these when the minister carries to its highest pitch the moral ascendancy which belongs to his station. It is this which furnishes him with a key to every heart, —and when the triumphs of charity are

superadded to the triumphs of argument, then it is that he sits enthroned over the affections of a willing people.

But I dare not venture any further on this track of observation. While yet standing aghast at a death which has come upon us all with the rapidity of a whirlwind, it might be easy, by means of a few touching and graphic recollections, to raise a tempest of emotion in the midst of you. It might be easy to awaken, in vivid delineation to the view of your mind, him who but a few days ago trod upon the streets of our city with the footsteps of firm manhood; and took part, with all his accustomed earnestness and vigour, in the busy concerns of living men. We could image forth the intense vitality which beamed in every look, and kept up, to the last moment, the incessant play of a mind, that was the fertile and ever-eddying fountain of just and solid thoughts. We could ask you to think of that master-spirit, with what presiding efficacy, yet with what perfect lightness and ease, he moved among his fellow-men; and, whether in the hall of debate, or in the circles of private conviviality, subordinated all to his purposes and views. We could fasten your regards on that dread encounter, when Death met this most powerful and resolute of men upon his way, and, laying instant arrest upon his movements, held him forth, in view of the citizens, as the proudest, while the most appalling of his triumphs. We could bid you weep at the thought of his agonized family—or rather, hurrying away from this big and unsupportable distress, we would tell of the public grief and the public consternation, and how the tidings of some great disaster flew from household to household, till, under the feeling of one common and overwhelming bereavement, the whole city became a city of mourners. We could recall to you that day when the earth was committed to the earth from which it came; and the deep seriousness that sat on every countenance bespoke, not the pageantry, but the whole power and reality of woe. We could point to his closing sepulchre, and read to you there the oft-repeated lesson of man's fading and evanescent glories. But we gladly, my brethren, we gladly make our escape from all these images, and all these sentiments, of oppressive melancholy. We would fain take refuge in other views, and betake ourselves to some other direction. What I should like, if I could accomplish it, were to take a calm and deliberate survey of a character, the exposition of which would, in fact, be the exposition of certain great principles, that I might hold up to your reverence and your practical imitation. It is thus, in fact, that he, though dead, yet speaks unto you. In attempting the office of an interpreter between the dead and the living, I feel the whole difficulty of the task which has been put into my hands; and I have to crave the indulgence of my fellow-mourners for one, who, after a preparation of infirmity and sorrow, now addresses them in fear, and in weakness, and with much trembling.

My observations will resolve themselves into two heads—the *character of the theologian*, and the *character of the man:* and in the prosecution of which, I trust that both the influences of sound doctrine and of sound example may be brought to bear upon you.

First, then, in briefest possible definition, his was the olden theology of Scotland. A thoroughly devoted son of our Church, he was, through life, the firm, the unflinching advocate of its articles, and its formularies, and its rights, and the whole polity of its constitution and discipline. His creed he derived, by inheritance, from the fathers of the Scottish Reformation—not, however, as based on human authority, but as based and upholden on the authority of Scripture alone. Its two great articles are—Justification, only by the righteousness of Christ—Sanctification, only by that Spirit which Christ is commissioned to bestow, —the one derived to the believer by faith; the other derived by faith too, because obtained and realised in the exercise of believing prayer. This simple and sublime theology, connecting the influences of Heaven with the moralities of earth, did the founders of our Church incorporate, by their catechisms, with the education of the people; and, through the medium of a clergy, who maintained their orthodoxy and their zeal for several generations, was it faithfully and efficiently preached in all the parishes of the land. The whole system originated in deepest piety; and has resulted in the

formation of the most moral and intelligent peasantry in Europe. Yet, in spite of this palpable evidence in its favour, it fell into discredit. Along with the elegant literature of our sister country, did the meagre Arminianism of her church make invasion among our clergy; and we certainly receded for a time from the good old way of our forefathers. This was the middle age of the Church of Scotland, an age of cold and feeble rationality, when Evangelism was derided as fanatical, and its very phraseology was deemed an ignoble and vulgar thing, in the upper classes of society. A morality without godliness—a certain prettiness of sentiment, served up in tasteful and well-turned periods of composition—the ethics of Philosophy, or of the academic chair, rather than the ethics of the Gospel—the speculations of Natural Theology, and perhaps an ingenious and scholar-like exposition of the credentials, rather than a faithful exposition of the contents of the New Testament,—These for a time dispossessed the topics of other days, and occupied that room in our pulpits, which had formerly been given to the demonstrations of sin, and of the Saviour. You know there has been a reflux. The tide of sentiment has been turned; and there is none who has given it greater momentum, or borne it more triumphantly along, than did the lamented Pastor of this congregation. His talents and his advocacy have thrown a lustre around the cause. The prejudices of thousands have given way before the might and the mastery of his resistless demonstrations. The evangelical system has of consequence risen, has risen prodigiously of late years, in the estimation of general society—connected to a great degree, we doubt not, under the blessing of God, with his powerful appeals to Scripture, and his no less powerful appeals to the consciences of men.

But, in the doing of this great service to the Christianity of the nation, he has laid you, his individual hearers, under a heavy load of responsibility for yourselves. You will never forget, I trust, either the terror of his loud and emphatic denunciations; or, what is still more persuasive, the urgency of his beseeching voice. You will remember the powerful and the pleading earnestness wherewith he hath so often dealt forth upon you, the impressive simplicities of the gospel—as, that Christ is the only Saviour; and the way of his prescribed holiness the only road to a blissful immortality. Your personal Christianity, my brethren, would be his best and noblest memorial—the most satisfactory evidence, that through the organs of recollection and conscience, he was still speaking to you. Often hath he plied you with the warnings of Scripture; and now, God himself hath interposed, and superadded to these the solemn warning of Providence. He hath recalled His ambassador, and you will soon follow him to the reckoning,—him to give account of his ministry; and you, on this principle of gospel equity, that to whom much is given, of him much will be required,—you to give account of the fruit of his ministrations.

I can afford to say no more on the character of his theology,—but, additional to this, and distinct from this, I would speak of what I term a characteristic of his theology. I beg you will attend for a moment to the difference of these two. The character is general, and that which he had in common with the members of a class,—the characteristic is special, or that by which his own individual theology was signalized, and by which I think it was ennobled. Could I make myself intelligible on this matter, it might furnish a cipher for the explanation of what many have called his peculiarities; but, instead of which you would at once see the great and the high principle which gave birth to them all.

The indispensable brevity of this explanation, both adds to the difficulty of my task, and forms a call on your more strenuous and sustained attention to me.

There is a distinction made by moralists, between the determinate and the indeterminate virtues. I will not attempt to define, but I will illustrate this distinction by an example.

Justice is a determinate virtue, and why?—because the precise line which separates it from its opposite, admits of being drawn with rigid and arithmetical precision; and he who transgresses this line by the minutest fraction, is clearly and distinctly chargeable with injustice. It is thus, that, in respect of this particu-

iar virtue, there may turn, on the difference of a single farthing, the utmost difference, or, I should rather say, the most distinct and diametric opposition between two characters. He who defrauds or steals, though but to the amount of a farthing, not only differs in degree, but differs in kind, or belongs to a distinct and opposite *genus* of character, from him whom no temptation could ever lead to swerve from the unbending and rectilineal course of virtue,—who would recoil with the utmost moral determination and delicacy from the slightest deviation; and would feel, as if principle had struck its surrender, and was now lying prostrate and degraded, should he enter by a single inch, or plant one footstep on the forbidden territory.

Generosity, again, is an indeterminate virtue, and why?—because there is no such definite line of separation between this virtue and its counterpart vice, as that you could pass by instant transition from it to its opposite. It does not proceed by arithmetical differences of a farthing more or less. You could not, as in the place of distinction between justice and injustice, put your finger at the point, where, in respect of this virtue of generosity, two men, by ever so little on the opposite sides of it, stood contrasted in diametric opposition to each other. The man who differs from his neighbour in withholding the farthing that is due, differs as much from him, as a vice does from its opposite virtue. The man who differs from his neighbour in withholding the farthing that would have brought his donation to an equality with the other's, only differs, not in kind but in degree and that very imperceptibly, being only a little less liberal, and a little less generous than his fellow. In the determinate virtue, one, by a single farthing, or a single footstep, might pass from a state of pure and exalted morality to a state of crime. In the indeterminate, there is what painters would call a shading off—a melting of hues into each other—a slow and insensible graduation.

It is not then with a determinate, as with an indeterminate virtue. You cannot tamper with it, even to the extent of the humblest fraction, without making an entire sacrifice. It has its palpable and precise landmark; and you cannot permit the encroachment of a single hair-breadth, without a virtual giving up of the whole territory. This principle is fully recognised in the ethics of Scripture: "He who is unfaithful in the least, is unfaithful also in much." Who would ever think of doing away the turpitude or the disgracefulness of theft, by alleging the paltriness and insignificance of the thing stolen? It is thus that the little pilferments of household service; the countless peccadilloes which go on in the departments of business, and confidential agency; the innumerable freedoms which are currently practised, and that without remorse, along the line which separates the just from the unjust,—do bespeak a fearful relaxation of principle in society. And it is thus also, on the other hand, that the purest and most honourable virtue, even to the extent of a moral chivalry, may be exemplified in littles. And, on the reverse position, that "he who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much," may the Christian domestic, in the perfect sacredness and safety of all that is committed to her, even to the minutest articles of her custody and care, show forth the heroism of sublimest principle.

A determinate virtue can no more bear to be violated, even though only by one footstep of encroachment, than an independent country can bear an entrance upon its border, though only by half a mile, on the part of an invading army. It is enough, in either instance, if the line be only crossed, to call forth in the one case the remonstrances of offended principle, and in the other, the resistance and the fire of indignant patriotism. In neither example, needs the material harm to have been of any sensible amount, that in both there might be the utmost feeling of a moral violence.

Before applying this principle to the object of appreciating the character of our dear and departed friend, let me remark, that Scripture, all over, is full of the principle, and full of the most striking and pertinent illustrations of it. "Thou mayest not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This was a determinate prohibition—and by the eating, though it had only been of one apple, complete and conclusive

outrage was done to it. The tree, uninjured by this act of disobedience, might, in the profusion of its golden clusters, have stood forth, to all appearance, in as great wealth and loveliness as before. But a definite commandment was broken; and therein it was that the whole damage and desecration lay. The jurisprudence of heaven was at stake; and so, on this solitary apple hinged the fate of our world. Infidels deride the history. Like those wretched arithmetical moralists, who make virtue an affair of product, and not of principle, they are unable to see how the moral grandeur of the transaction just rises, in proportion to the humility of its material accompaniments; and so, in the event of our earth burdened with a curse to its latest generations, do we behold at once the truth of our principle, and terrible demonstration given to the unbroken sanctity of the Godhead.

And the same principle ever and anon breaks forth in the subsequent dealings of God with the world. Let me only instance from the history of Israel's entrance into the promised land. The silver and the gold that were taken from their enemies, were all to be brought as consecrated things into the treasury of the Lord. This was a determinate precept; and just because of one violation, the progress of the Jewish victories was arrested, and the frown of Heaven's offended authority spread disaster and dismay over the hosts of Israel. It was Achan's accursed thing which distempered for a time, and was like to have blasted, the whole undertaking. They were his goodly Babylonish garment, and wedge of gold, and two hundred shekels of silver—secreted in the midst of an otherwise immaculate camp—that called forth the resentment and the reckoning of a God of vengeance; and, not till the whole burden of this provocation was swept away—not till the offence, and the offending household, were taken forth from the midst of the congregation and destroyed—did God turn Him from the fierceness of his anger, or was the jealousy of Heaven appeased, because of the injury done to a commandment intact and unviolable.

And, lastly, what has been so often exemplified in the history of the Old, is alike exemplified in the doctrines and declarations of the New Testament. "A man," says the apostle, "is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." This is a determinate principle; but the Judaizing Christians would fain have introduced one slight and circumstantial exception to it. They made a stand for the rite of circumcision; and were willing that all the other works of the law should be discharged from the matter of our justifying righteousness, were there only, along with the faith of Christ, a place found for this distinguishing ordinance of their nation. It is against this demand and predilection of the Jews that the apostle sets himself, in his epistle to the Galatians—where he rejects the compromise; and proves, by admirable reasoning, that it would not only deform the faith of the Gospel, but destroy it.

Admit this, trifling though it may appear, and "Christ is dead in vain;" you have fallen from your dependence upon Him, and he has "become of no effect unto you." It is thus, that this bold, this uncompromising champion of the Church's purity, has bequeathed, in this epistle, a precious example to the Christian ministers of all ages. What Luther, after him, called the article of a standing or a falling church, is here defended from the contact and the contamination of every deleterious ingredient. The *materiel* of a sinner's justification with God, instead of being partitioned, as many would have it, between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of man, is strenuously contended for by the apostle in this argument, as being pure, unmixed, and homogeneous. The epistle to the Galatians is a composition charged throughout with the very essence of principle; and the thing to be noted is, that while in appearance Paul is only warding off from the religion of Christ a misplaced or incongruous ceremony, he embarks the whole of his apostolic strength and apostolic zeal upon the contest, and is, in fact, fighting for the foundation of the faith.

This will at once prepare you to understand, what I have taken the liberty of terming, a characteristic of his theology, whose general character I have described as being the theology of the Church of

Scotland. The peculiarity lay in this, that present him with a measure, and he, of all other men, saw at once, and with the force of instant discernment, the principle that was embodied in it. And did that principle belong to the class of the determinate, he furthermore saw, with every sound moralist before him, that he could not recede, by one inch or hair-breadth, from the assertion of it, without making a virtual surrender of the whole. The point of resistance then, it is obvious, must be at the beginning of the mischief—or at that part in the border of the vineyard, where it first threatened to make inroad. It was there he planted his footstep; and there, with the might and prowess of a champion, did he ward off from our Church, many a hurtful and withering contamination. His was never a puerile or unmeaning conflict—but a conflict of high moral elements. It was the warfare of a giant, enlisted on the side of some great principle; and, with a heart always in the right place, it was this which imparted a substantial rectitude to every cause, and threw a moral grandeur over his controversies.

You are aware that no two things can be more dissimilar, than a religion of points, and a religion of principles. No one will suspect his of being a religion of senseless or unmeaning points. Altogether, there was a manhood in his understanding—a strength and a firmness in the whole staple of his mind, as remote as possible from whatever is weakly and superstitiously fanciful. It is therefore, you will find, that whenever he laid the stress of his zeal or energy on a cause—instead of a stress disproportionate to its importance, there was always the weight of some great, some cardinal principle underneath to sustain it. It is thus, that every subject he undertook was throughout charged with sentiment. The whole drift and doings of the man were instinct with it; and that, too, sentiment fresh from the word of God, or warm with generous enthusiasm for the best interests of the Church and of the species.

There is one peculiarity by which he was signalized above all his fellows; and which makes him an incalculable loss, both to the Church and to the Country at large. We have known men of great power, but they wanted promptitude; and we have known men of great promptitude, but they wanted power. The former, if permitted to concentrate their energies on one great object, may, by dint of a riveted perseverance, succeed in its accomplishment—but they cannot bear to have this concentration broken up; and it is torture to all their habits, when assailed by the importunity of those manifold and miscellaneous applications, to which every public man is exposed, from the philanthropy of our modern day. The latter again—that is, they who have the promptitude but not the power, facility without force, and whose very lightness favours both the exceeding variety and velocity of their movements,—why, they are alert and serviceable, and can acquit themselves in a respectable way of any slender or secondary part which is put into their hands; but then, they want predominance and momentum in any one direction to which they may betake themselves. But in him, never did such ponderous faculties meet with such marvellous power of wielding them at pleasure,—insomuch, that even on the impulse of most unforeseen occasions, he could bring them immediately to bear—and that, with sweeping and resistless effect, on the object before him. Such a combination of forces enlisted, as all within him was, on the side of Christianity, would have been of incalculable service in this our day. It is true, the land in which we live is yet free from the taint and the scandal of so gross an abomination; but you cannot fail to have remarked, how, mixed up with their rancorous politics, there have of late been the frequent outbreakings of a coarse and revolting impiety in the popular meetings of England. In the whole compass of the moral world, we know not a more hideous spectacle than plebian infidelity, with its rude invectives, its savage and boisterous outcry against all the restraints and institutions of the gospel. If, indeed, our next war is to be a war of principles, then before the battle is begun, the noblest of our champions has fallen. Yet we dare not give up in despondency, a cause, which has truth for its basis, and the guarantee of Heaven's omnipotence for its complete and everlasting triumph. In this reeling of the nations, this gradual loosening of all

spirits from the ancient holds of habit and of principle—still we cannot fear that the Church, the one and indestructible Church, though tossed and cradled in the storm, will not be riveted more securely upon its basis. "We are distressed, but not in despair; troubled, yet not forsaken; cast down, yet not destroyed." "Help, Lord, when the godly man ceaseth, and the righteous fail from the children of men."

But let me again offer one word of special address to the members of his congregation. I have spoken of his resistance to compromise in all the great matters of Christian faith and Christian practice. Let me entreat, that though dead, he may still speak this lesson to you. I would rather, and I am quite sure that all along he would, that your security before God rested altogether on works, or altogether on grace, rather than that, like the feet of Nebuchadnezzer's image, partly of clay, and partly of iron, it rested on the motley foundation of two unlike and heterogeneous ingredients. Hold fast what you have gotten from him on this subject; and be assured that if, forgetful of the decision and distinctness of his principles, you ever shall listen with pleasure to him who vacillates from the one to the other, or would attempt a composition between the righteousness of man, and the righteousness of Christ—there is not a likelier method in which shipwreck can be made both of the faith and the piety of this congregation. And you know, that while none more clear and confident than he in preaching the dogmata of his creed, he was far, and very far from being a preacher of dogmata alone. You recollect his earnest enforcement of duty in all that concerned the relation between God and man, and in all that concerned the relations of human society. But it was duty bottomed on an evangelical ground-work—even on those deep and well-laid principles of belief, by which alone the righteousness of the life and practice is upholden. He was truly a preacher of faith—yet his last words in this pulpit, may be regarded as his dying testimony to the worth of that charity which is greater than faith. I do not mean the charity of a mere contribution by the hand; but the charity of that love in the heart, which prompts to all the services of humanity.*

I must now satisfy myself with a few slight and rapid touches on his character as a man. It is a subject I dare hardly approach. To myself, he was at all times a joyous, hearty, gallant, honourable, and out and out most-trustworthy friend—while, in harmony with a former observation, there were beautifully projected on this broad and general ground-work, some of friendship's finest and most considerate delicacies. By far the most declared and discernible feature in his character, was a dauntless, and direct, and right-forward honesty, that needed no disguise for itself, and was impatient of aught like dissimulation or disguise in other men. There were withal a heart and a hilarity in his companionship, that everywhere carried its own welcome along with it; and there were none who moved with greater acceptance, or wielded a greater ascendant over so wide a circle of living society. Christianity does not overbear the constitutional varieties either of talent or of temperament. After the conversion of the apostles, their complexional differences of mind and character remained with them; and there can be no doubt that, apart from, and anterior to the influence of the gospel, the hand of nature had stamped a generosity, and a sincerity, and an openness on the subject of our description, among the very strongest of the lineaments which belong to him. Under an urgent sense of rectitude, he delivered himself with vigour and with vehemence, in behalf of what he deemed to be its cause—but I would have you to discriminate between the vehemence of passion and the vehemence of sentiment, which, like though they be in outward expression, are wholly different and dissimilar in themselves. His was, mainly, the vehemence of sentiment, which, hurrying him when it did, into what he afterwards felt to be excesses, were immediately followed up by the relentings of a noble nature. The pulpit is not the place for the idolatry of an unqualified panegyric on any of our fellow-mortals—but it is impossible not

* His last sermon, preached with all his accustomed earnestness and zeal, was a pleading in behalf of the Infirmary of Edinburgh.

to acknowledge, that whatever might have been his errors, he was right at bottom—that truth, and piety, and ardent philanthropy formed the substratum of his character; and that the tribute was altogether a just one, when the profoundest admiration, along with the pungent regrets of his fellow-citizens, did follow him to his grave.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Blessedness of considering the Case of the Poor.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."
PSALM xli. 1.

THERE is an evident want of congeniality between the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the Christian. The term "wisdom," carries my reverence along with it. It brings before me a grave and respectable character, whose rationality predominates over the inferior principles of his constitution; and to whom I willingly yield that peculiar homage which the enlightened, and the judicious, and the manly, are sure to exact from a surrounding neighbourhood. Now, so long as this wisdom has for its object some secular advantage, I yield it an unqualified reverence. It is a reverence which all understand, and all sympathise with. If, in private life, a man be wise in the management of his farm, or his fortune, or his family; or if, in public life, he have wisdom to steer an empire through all its difficulties, and to carry it to aggrandisement and renown—the respect which I feel for such wisdom as this is most cordial and entire, and supported by the universal acknowledgement of all whom I call to attend to it.

Let me now suppose that this wisdom has changed its object—that the man whom I am representing to exemplify this respectable attribute, instead of being wise for time, is wise for eternity—that he labours by the faith and sanctification of the gospel for unperishable honours—that, instead of listening to him with admiration at his sagacity, as he talks of business, or politics, or agriculture, we are compelled to listen to him talking of the hope within the veil, and of Christ being the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation:—what becomes of your respect for him now? Are there not some of you who are quite sensible that this respect is greatly impaired, since the wisdom of the man has taken so unaccountable a change in its object and in its direction? The truth is, that the greater part of the world feel no respect at all for a wisdom which they do not comprehend. They may love the innocence of a decidedly religious character, but they feel no sublime or commanding sentiment of veneration for its wisdom. All the truth of the Bible, and all the grandeur of eternity, will not redeem it from a certain degree of contempt. Terms which lower, undervalue, and degrade, suggest themselves to the mind; and strongly dispose it to throw a mean and disagreeable colouring over the man, who, sitting loose to the objects of the world, has become altogether a Christian. It is needless to expatiate; but what I have seen myself, and what must have fallen under the observation of many whom I address, carry in them the testimony of experience to the assertion of the apostle, "that the things of the spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

Now, what I have said of the respectable attribute of wisdom, is applicable, with almost no variation, to another attribute of the human character, to which I would assign the gentler epithet of "lovely." The attribute to which I allude, is that of benevolence. This is the burden of every poet's song, and every eloquent and interesting enthusiast gives it his te-

timony. I speak not of the enthusiasm of methodists and devotees, I speak of that enthusiasm of fine sentiment which embellishes the page of elegant literature, and is addressed to all her sighing and amiable votaries, in the various forms of novel, and poetry, and dramatic entertainment. You would think if any thing could bring the Christian at one with the world around him, it would be this; and that in the ardent benevolence which figures in novels, and sparkles in poetry, there would be an entire congeniality with the benevolence of the gospel. I venture to say, however, that there never existed a stronger repulsion between two contending sentiments, than between the benevolence of the Christian, and the benevolence which is the theme of elegant literature—that the one, with all its accompaniments of tears, and sensibilities, and interesting cottages, is neither felt nor understood by the Christian as such; and the other, with its work and its labour of love, its *enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, and its living, not to itself, but to the will of Him who died for us, and who rose again, is not only not understood, but positively nauseated, by the poetical *amateur*.

But the contrast does not stop here. The benevolence of the gospel is not only at antipodes with that of the visionary sons and daughters of poetry, but it even varies in some of its most distinguishing features from the experimental benevolence of real and familiar life. The fantastic benevolence of poetry is now indeed pretty well exploded; and, in the more popular works of the age, there is a benevolence of a far truer and more substantial kind substituted in its place—the benevolence which you meet with among men of business and observation—the benevolence which bustles and finds employment among the most public and ordinary scenes; and which seeks for objects, not where the flower blows loveliest, and the stream, with its gentle murmurs, falls sweetest on the ear; but finds them in its every-day walks, goes in quest of them through the heart of the great city, and is not afraid to meet them in the most putrid lanes and loathsome receptacles.

Now, it must be acknowledged, that this benevolence is of a far more respectable kind than that poetic sensibility, which is of no use, because it admits of no application. Yet I am not afraid to say, that, respectable as it is, it does not come up to the benevolence of the Christian; and is at variance, in some of its most capital ingredients, with the morality of the gospel. It is well, and very well as far as it goes; and that Christian is wanting to the will of his Master, who refuses to share and go along with it. The Christian will do all this, but he would like to do more; and it is at the precise point where he proposes to do more, that he finds himself abandoned by the co-operation and good wishes of those who had hitherto supported him. The Christian goes as far as the votary of this useful benevolence; but then he would like to go further, and this is the point at which he is mortified to find that his old coadjutors refuse to go along with him; and that, instead of being strengthened by their assistance, he has their contempt and their ridicule, or, at all events, their total want of sympathy to contend with.

The truth is, that the benevolence I allude to, with all its respectable air of business and good sense, is altogether a secular benevolence. Through all the extent of its operations, it carries in it no reference to the eternal duration of its object. Time, and the accommodations of time, form all its object, and all its exercise. It labours, and often with success, to provide for its object a warm and a well-sheltered tenement; but it looks not beyond the few little years when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, when the soul shall be driven from its perishable tenement, and the only benevolence it will acknowledge or care for, will be the benevolence of those who have directed it to a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This, then, is the point at which the benevolence of the gospel separates from that worldly benevolence, to which, as far as it goes, I offer my cheerful and unmingled testimony. The one minds earthly things, the other has its conversation in heaven. Even when the immediate object of both is the same, you will generally perceive an evident distinction in the principle. Individuals, for example, may co-operate and will often meet in the same room, be members of the same society, and go hand in hand most cordially

together for the education of the poor. But the forming habits of virtuous industry, and good members of society, which are the sole consideration in the heart of the worldly philanthropist, are but mere accessaries in the heart of the Christian. The main impulse of his benevolence, lies in furnishing the poor with the means of enjoying that bread of life which came down from heaven, and in introducing them to the knowledge of those Scriptures which are the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. Now, it is so far a blessing to the world, that there is a co-operation in the immediate object. But what I contend for, is, that there is a total want of congeniality in the principle; that the moment you strip the institution of its temporal advantages, and make it repose on the naked grandeur of eternity, it is fallen from, or laughed at, as one of the chimeras of fanaticism; and left to the despised efforts of those whom they esteem to be unaccountable people, who subscribe for missions, and squander their money on Bible societies. Strange effect, you would think, of eternity to degrade the object with which it is connected! But so it is. The blaze of glory, which is thrown around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher, is refused to the martyrdom of a Christian. When a statesman dies, who lifted his intrepid voice for the liberty of the species, we hear of nothing but of the shrines and the monuments of immortality. Put into his place one of those sturdy reformers, who, unmoved by councils and inquisitions, stood up for the religious liberties of the world: and it is no sooner done, than the full tide of congenial sympathy and admiration is at once arrested. We have all heard of the benevolent apostleship of Howard, and what Christian will be behind his fellows with his applauding testimony? But will they, on the other hand, share his enthusiasm, when he tells them of the apostleship of Paul, who, in the sublimer sense of the term, accomplished the liberty of the captive, and brought them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house? Will they share in the holy benevolence of the apostle, when he pours out his ardent effusions in behalf of his countrymen? They were at that time on the eve of the cruellest sufferings. The whole vengeance of the Roman power was mustering to bear upon them. The siege and destruction of their city form one of the most dreadful tragedies in the history of war. Yet Paul seems to have had another object in his eye. It was their souls and their eternity which engrossed him. Can you sympathise with him in this principle; or join in kindred benevolence with him, when he says, that "my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved?"

But, to bring my list of examples to a close, the most remarkable of them all may be collected from the history of the present attempts which are now making to carry the knowledge of divine revelation into the Pagan and uncivilized countries of the world. Now, it may be my ignorance, but I am certainly not aware of the fact—that without a book of religious faith; without religion, in fact, being the errand and occasion, we have ever been able in modern times so far to compel the attention and to subdue the habits of savages, as to throw in among them the use and the possession of a written language. Certain it is, however, at all events, that this very greatest step in the process of converting a wild man of the woods into a humanized member of society, has been accomplished by Christian missionaries. They have put into the hands of barbarians this mighty instrument of a written language, and they have taught them how to use it.* They have formed an orthography for wandering and untutored savages. They have given a shape and a name to their barbarous articulations; and the children of men, who lived on the prey of the wilderness, are now forming in village schools to the arts and the decencies of cultivated

* As, for instance, Mr. John Elliot, and the Moravian brethren among the Indians of New England and Pennsylvania; the Moravians in South America; Mr. Hans Egede, and the Moravians in Greenland; the latter in Labrador, among the Esquimaux; the Missionaries in Otaheite, and other South Sea Islands; and Mr. Brunton, under the patronage of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, who reduced the language of the Susoos, a nation on the coast of Africa, to writing and grammatical form, and printed in it a spelling-book, vocabulary, catechism, and some tracts. Other instances besides might be given.

life. Now, I am not involving you in the controversy, whether civilization should precede Christianity, or Christianity should precede civilization. It is not to what has been said on the subject, but to what has been done, that we are pointing your attention. We appeal to the fact; and as an illustration of the principle we have been attempting to lay before you, we call upon you to mark the feelings, and the countenance, and the language, of the mere academic moralist, when you put into his hand the authentic and proper document where the fact is recorded—we mean a missionary report, or a missionary magazine. We know that there are men who have so much of the firm nerve and hardihood of philosophy about them, as not to be repelled from truth in whatever shape, or from whatever quarter, it comes to them. But there are others of a humbler cast, who have transferred their homage from the omnipotence of truth, to the omnipotence of a name; who, because missionaries, while they are accomplishing the civilization and labouring also for the eternity of savages, have lifted the cry of fanaticism against them; who, because missionaries revere the word of God, and utter themselves in the language of the New Testament, nauseate every word that comes from them as overrun with the flavour and phraseology of methodism; who are determined, in short, to abominate all that is missionary, and suffer the very sound of the epithet to fill their minds with an overwhelming association of repugnance, and prejudice, and disgust

We would not have counted this so remarkable an example, had it not been that missionaries are accomplishing the very object on which the advocates for civilization love to expatiate. They are working for temporal good far more effectually than any adventurer in the cause ever did before; but mark the want of congeniality between the benevolence of this world and the benevolence of the Christian; they incur contempt, because they are working for spiritual and eternal good also: Nor do the earthly blessings which they scatter so abundantly in their way, redeem from scorn the purer and the nobler principle which inspires them.

These observations seem to be an applicable introduction to the subject before us. I call your attention to the *way* in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say in the text before us, Commisserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however useful for the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle within which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisible soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration*—Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor—a grave and prosaic exercise I do allow, and which makes no figure in these high-wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstatics of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognizance of a higher faculty—a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation as well as of sentiment; and, in so doing, it puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions, by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon

the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage, attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle. I want to press its advantages upon you, for I can in no other way recommend the Society whose claims I am appointed to lay before you, so effectually to your patronage. My time will only permit me to lay before you a few of their advantages, and I shall therefore confine myself to two leading particulars.

I. The man who considers the poor, instead of slumbering over the emotions of a useless sensibility, among those imaginary beings whom poetry and romance have laid before him in all the elegance of fictitious history, will bestow the labour and the attention of actual business among the poor of the real and the living world. Benevolence is the burden of every romantic tale, and of every poet's song. It is dressed out in all the fairy enchantments of imagery and eloquence. All is beauty to the eye and music to the ear. Nothing seen but pictures of felicity, and nothing heard but the soft whispers of gratitude and affection. The reader is carried along by this soft and delighted representation of virtue. He accompanies his hero through all the fancied varieties of his history. He goes along with him to the cottage of poverty and disease, surrounded, as we may suppose, with all the charms of rural obscurity, and where the murmurs of an adjoining rivulet accord with the finer and more benevolent sensibilities of the mind. He enters this enchanting retirement, and meets with a picture of distress, adorned in all the elegance of fiction. Perhaps a father laid on a bed of languishing, and supported by the labours of a pious and affectionate family, where kindness breathes in every word, and anxiety sits upon every countenance —where the industry of his children struggles in vain to supply the cordials which his poverty denies him—where nature sinks every hour, and all feel a gloomy foreboding, which they strive to conceal, and tremble to express. The hero of romance enters, and the glance of his benevolent eye enlightens this darkest recess of misery. He turns him to the bed of languishing, tells the sick man that there is still hope, and smiles comfort on his despairing children. Day after day he repeats his kindness and his charity. They hail his approach as the footsteps of an angel of mercy. The father lives to bless his deliverer. The family reward his benevolence by the homage of an affectionate gratitude; and in the piety of their evening prayer, offer up thanks to the God of heaven, for opening the hearts of the rich to kindly and beneficent attentions. The reader weeps with delight. The visions of paradise play before his fancy. His tears flow, and his heart dissolves in all the luxury of tenderness.

Now, we do not deny that the members of the Destitute Sick Society *may* at times have met with some such delightful scene, to soothe, and to encourage them. But put the question to any of their visitors, and he will not fail to tell you, that if they had never moved but when they had something like this to excite and to gratify their hearts, they would seldom have moved at all; and their usefulness to the poor would have been reduced to a very humble fraction of what they have actually done for them. What is this but to say, that it is the business of a religious instructor to give you, not the elegant, but the true representation of benevolence—to represent it not so much as a luxurious indulgence to the finer sensibilities of the mind, but according to the sober declaration of Scripture, as a work and as a labour—as a business in which you must encounter vexation, opposition, and fatigue; where you are not always to meet with that elegance which allures the fancy, or with that humble and retired adversity, which interests the more tender propensities of the heart; but as a business where reluctance must often be overcome by a sense of duty, and where, though oppressed at every step, by envy, disgust and disappointment, you are bound to persevere, in obedience to the law of God, and the sober instigations of principle.

The benevolence of the gospel lies in action. The benevolence of our fictitious writers, is a kind of high-wrought delicacy of feeling and sentiment. The one dissipates all its fervour in sighs, and

tears, and idle aspirations—the other reserves its strength for efforts and execution. The one regards it as a luxurious enjoyment for the heart—the other, as a work and a business for the hand. The one sits in indolence, and broods, in visionary rapture, over its schemes of ideal philanthropy—the other steps abroad, and enlightens, by its presence, the dark and pestilential hovels of disease. The one wastes away in empty ejaculation—the other gives time and trouble to the work of beneficence—gives education to the orphan—provides clothes for the naked, and lays food on the tables of the hungry. The one is indolent and capricious, and often does mischief by the occasional overflowings of a whimsical and ill-directed charity—the other is vigilant and discerning, and takes care lest its distributions be injudicious, and the efforts of benevolence be misapplied. The one is soothed with the luxury of feeling, and reclines in easy and indolent satisfaction—the other shakes off the deceitful langour of contemplation and solitude, and delights in a scene of activity. Remember, that virtue, in general, is not to feel but to do—not merely to conceive a purpose, but to carry that purpose into execution—not merely to be overpowered by the impression of a sentiment, but to practise what it loves, and to imitate what it admires.

To be benevolent in speculation, is often to be selfish in action and in reality. The vanity and the indolence of man delude him into a thousand inconsistencies. He professes to love the name and the semblance of virtue; but the labour of exertion and of self-denial, terrifies him from attempting it. The emotions of kindness are delightful to his bosom, but then they are little better than a selfish indulgence. They terminate in his own enjoyment. They are a mere refinement of luxury. His eye melts over the picture of fictitious distress, while not a tear is left for the actual starvation and misery by which he is surrounded. It is easy to indulge the imaginations of a visionary heart in going over a scene of fancied affliction, because here there is no sloth to overcome—no avaricious propensity to control—no offensive or disgusting circumstance to allay the unmingled impression of sympathy which a soft and elegant picture is calculated to awaken. It is not so easy to be benevolent in action and in reality, because here there is fatigue to undergo—there is time and money to give—there is the mortifying spectacle of vice, and folly, and ingratitude, to encounter. We like to give you the fair picture of love to man; because to throw over it false and fictitious embellishments, is injurious to its cause. They elevate the fancy by romantic visions which can never be realized. They embitter the heart by the most severe and mortifying disappointments, and often force us to retire in disgust from what heaven has intended to be the theatre of our discipline and preparation. Take the representation of the Bible. Benevolence is a work and a labour. It often calls for the severest efforts of vigilance and industry—a habit of action not to be acquired in the schools of fine sentiment, but in the walks of business; in the dark and dismal receptacles of misery; in the hospitals of disease; in the putrid lanes of our great cities where poverty dwells in lank and ragged wretchedness, agonized with pain, faint with hunger, and shivering in a frail and unsheltered tenement.

You are not to conceive yourself a real lover of your species, and entitled to the praise or the reward of benevolence, because you weep over a fictitious representation of human misery. A man may weep in the indolence of a studious and contemplative retirement; he may breathe all the tender aspirations of humanity; but what avails all this warm and effusive benevolence, if it is never exerted—if it never rises to execution—if it never carry him to the accomplishment of a single benevolent purpose—if it shrink from activity, and sicken at the pain of fatigue? It is easy, indeed, to come forward with the cant and hypocrisy of fine sentiment—to have a heart trained to the emotions of benevolence, while the hand refuses the labour of discharging its offices—to weep for amusement, and have nothing to spare for human suffering, but the tribute of an indolent and unmeaning sympathy. Many of you must be acquainted with that corruption of Christian doctrine which has been termed Antinomianism. It professes the highest reverence for the Su-

preme Being; while it refuses obedience to the lessons of His authority. It professes the highest gratitude for the sufferings of Christ; while it refuses that course of life and action which He demands of his followers. It professes to adore the tremendous Majesty of heaven, and to weep in shame and in sorrow over the sinfulness of degraded humanity; while every day it insults heaven by the enormity of its misdeeds, and evinces the insincerity of its repentance by its wilful perseverance in the practice of iniquity.

This Antinomianism is generally condemned; and none reprobate it more than the votaries of fine sentiment—your men of taste and elegant literature—your epicures of feeling, who riot in all the luxury of theatrical emotion; and who, in their admiration of what is tender, and beautiful, and cultivated, have always turned with disgust from the doctrines of a sour and illiberal theology. We may say to such, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." Theirs is, to all intents and purposes, Antinomianism—and an Antinomianism of a far more dangerous and deceitful kind, than the Antinomianism of a spurious and pretended orthodoxy. In the Antinomianism of religion, there is nothing to fascinate or deceive you. It wears an air of repulsive bigotry, more fitted to awaken disgust, than to gain the admiration of proselytes. There is a glaring deformity in its aspect, which alarms you at the very outset, and is an outrage to that natural morality, which, dark and corrupted as it is, is still strong enough to lift its loud remonstrances against it. But, in the Antinomianism of high-wrought sentiment, there is a deception far more insinuating. It steals upon you under the semblance of virtue. It is supported by the delusive colouring of imagination and poetry. It has all the graces and embellishments of literature to recommend it. Vanity is soothed, and conscience lulls itself to repose in this dream of feeling and of indolence.

Let us dismiss these lying vanities, and regulate our lives by the truth and soberness of the New Testament. Benevolence is not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It is a business with men as they are, and with human life as drawn by the rough hand of experience. It is a duty which you must perform at the call of principle; though there be no voice of eloquence to give splendour to your exertions, and no music of poetry to lead your willing footsteps through the bowers of enchantment. It is not the impulse of high and ecstatic emotion. It is an exertion of principle. You must go to the poor man's cottage, though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you by the gentleness of its murmurs. If you look for the romantic simplicity of fiction, you will be disappointed; but it is your duty to persevere, in spite of every discouragement. Benevolence is not merely a feeling, but a principle—not a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.

It must now be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributions of charity. You must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises. Will he husband your charity with care, or will he squander it away in idleness and dissipation? Will he satisfy himself with the brutal luxury of the moment, and neglect the supply of his more substantial necessities, or suffer his children to be trained in ignorance and depravity? Will charity corrupt him into slothfulness? What is his peculiar necessity? Is it the want of health, or the want of employment? Is it the pressure of a numerous family? Does he need medicine to administer to the diseases of his children? Does he need fuel or raiment to protect them from the inclemency of winter? Does he need money to satisfy the yearly demands of his landlord; or to purchase books, and to pay for the education of his offspring?

To give money, is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's sick bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. You must examine his accounts. You must try to recover those debts which are due to his family. You must try to recover those wages which are detained by the injustice or the rapacity of his master. You must employ

your mediation with his superiors. You must represent to them the necessities of his situation. You must solicit their assistance, and awaken their feelings to the tale of his calamity. This is benevolence in its plain, and sober, and substantial reality; though eloquence may have withheld its imagery, and poetry may have denied its graces and its embellishments. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but, if done under the influence of Christian principle—in a word, if done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity.

You have all heard of the division of labour, and I wish you to understand, that the advantage of this principle may be felt as much in the operations of charity, as in the operations of trade and of manufactures. The work of beneficence does not lie in the one act of giving money; there must be the act of attendance; there must be the act of inquiry; there must be the act of judicious application. But I can conceive that an individual may be so deficient in the varied experience and attention which a work so extensive demands, that he may retire in disgust and discouragement from the practice of charity altogether. The institution of a Society such as this, saves this individual to the cause. It takes upon itself all the subsequent acts in the work and labour of love, and restricts his part to the mere act of giving money. It fills the middle space between the dispensers and the recipients of charity. The habits of many who now hear me, may disqualify them for the work of examination. They may have no time for it; they may live at a distance from the objects; they may neither know how to introduce, nor how to conduct themselves in the management of all the details; their want of practice and of experience may disable them for the work of repelling imposition; they may try to gain the necessary habits; and it is right that every individual among us should each, in his own sphere, consider the poor, and qualify themselves for a judicious and discriminating charity. But, in the mean time, the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, is an instrument ready made to our hands. Avail yourselves of this instrument immediately; and, by the easiest part of the exercise of charity, which is to give money, you carry home to the poor all the benefit of its most difficult exercises.*

The experience which you want, the members of this laudable Society are in possession of. By the work and observation of years, a stock of practical wisdom is now accumulated among them. They have been long inured to all that is loathsome and discouraging in this good work; and they have nerve, and hardihood, and principle, to front it. They are every way qualified to be the carriers of your bounty, for it is a path they have long travelled in. Give the money, and these conscientious men will soon bring it into contact with the right objects. They know the way through all the obscurities of this metropolis; and they can bring the offerings of your charity to people whom you will never see, and into houses you will never enter. It is not easy to conceive, far less to compute the extent of human misery; but these men can give you experience for it. They can show you their registers of the sick and of the dying; they are familiar with disease in all its varieties of faintness, and breathlessness, and pain.—Sad union! they are called to witness it in conjunction with poverty; and well do they know that there is an eloquence in the imploring looks of these helpless poor, which no description can set before you. Oh! my brethren, figure to yourselves the calamity in all its soreness, and measure your bounty by the actual greatness of the claims, and not by the feebleness of their advocate.

I have trespassed upon your patience; but, at the hazard of carrying my address to a length that is unusual, I must still say more. Nor would I ever forgive myself if I neglected to set the eternity of the poor in all its importance before you. This is the second point of consid-

* A Society for the Destitute *Sick*, is not nearly liable to such an extent of objection, as a Society for the Relief of General Indigence. But it were well, if they kept themselves rigidly to their assigned object; and that the cases to which they administered their aid were competently certified.

eration to which I wish to direct you. The man who considers the poor, will give his chief anxiety to the wants of their eternity. It must be evident to all of you, that this anxiety is little felt. I do not appeal for the evidence of this to the selfish part of mankind—there we are not to expect it. I go to those who are really benevolent—who have a wish to make others happy, and who take trouble in so doing; and it is a striking observation, how little the salvation of these others is the object of that benevolence which makes them so amiable. It will be found, that, in by far the greater number of instances, this principle is all consumed on the accommodations of time, and the necessities of the body. It is the meat which feeds them—the garment which covers them—the house which shelters them—the money which purchases all things: these, I say, are what form the chief topics of benevolent anxiety. Now, we do not mean to discourage this principle. We cannot afford it; there is too little of it; and it forms too refreshing an exception to that general selfishness which runs throughout the haunts of business and ambition, for us to say any thing against it. We are not cold-blooded enough to refuse our delighted concurrence to an exercise so amiable in its principle, and so pleasing in the warm and comfortable spectacle which it lays before us.

The poor, it is true, ought never to forget, that it is to their own industry, and to the wisdom and economy of their own management, that they are to look for the elements of subsistence—that if idleness and prodigality shall lay hold of the mass of our population, no benevolence, however unbounded, can ever repair a mischief so irrecoverable—that if they will not labour for themselves, it is not in the power of the rich to create a sufficiency for them; and that though every heart were opened, and every purse emptied in the cause, it would absolutely go for nothing towards forming a well-fed, a well-lodged, or a well-conditioned peasantry. Still, however, there are cases which no foresight could prevent, and no industry could provide for —where the blow falls heavy and unexpected on some devoted son or daughter of misfortune, and where, though thoughtlessness and folly may have had their share, benevolence, not very nice in its calculations, will feel the overpowering claim of actual helpless, and imploring misery. Now, I again offer my cheerful testimony to such benevolence as this; I count it delightful to see it singling out its object, and sustaining it against the cruel pressure of age and of indigence; and when I enter a cottage where I see a warmer fireside, or a more substantial provision, than the visible means can account for, I say that the landscape, in all its summer glories, does not offer an object so gratifying, as when referred to the vicinity of the great man's house, and the people who live in it, and am told that I will find my explanation *there*. Kind and amiable people! your benevolence is most lovely in its display, but oh! it is perishable in its consequences. Does it never occur to you, that in a few years this favourite will die—that he will go to the place where neither cold nor hunger will reach him, but that a mighty interest remains, of which, both of us may know the certainty, though neither you nor I can calculate the extent. Your benevolence is too short—it does not shoot far enough a-head—it is like regaling a child with a sweetmeat or a toy, and then abandoning the happy unreflecting infant to exposure. You make the poor old man happy with your crumbs and your fragments, but he is an infant on the mighty range of infinite duration; and will you leave the soul, which has this infinity to go through, to its chance? How comes it that the grave should throw so impenetrable a shroud over the realities of eternity? How comes it that heaven, and hell, and judgment, should be treated as so many nonentities; and that there should be as little real and operative sympathy felt for the soul, which lives for ever, as for the body after it is dead, or for the dust into which it moulders? Eternity is longer than time; the arithmetic, my brethren, is all on our side upon this question; and the wisdom which calculates, and guides itself by calculation, gives its weighty and respectable support to what may be called the benevolence of faith.

Now, if there be one employment more fitted than another to awaken this benevolence, it is the peculiar employment

of that Society for which I am now pleading. I would have anticipated such benevolence from the situation they occupy, and the information before the public bears testimony to the fact. The truth is, that the diseases of the body may be looked upon as so many outlets through which the soul finds its way to eternity. Now, it is at these outlets that the members of this Society have stationed themselves. This is the interesting point of survey at which they stand, and from which they command a look of both worlds. They have placed themselves in the avenues which lead from time to eternity, and they have often to witness the awful transition of a soul hovering at the entrance—struggling its way through the valley of the shadow of death, and at last breaking loose from the confines of all that is visible. Do you think it likely that men, with such spectacles before them, will withstand the sense of eternity? No, my brethren, they cannot, they have not. Eternity, I rejoice to announce to you, is not forgotten by them; and with their care for the diseases of the body, they are neither blind nor indifferent to the fact, that the soul is diseased also. We know it well. There is an indolent and superficial theology, which turns its eyes from the danger, and feels no pressing call for the application of the remedy—which reposes more in its own vague and self-assumed conceptions of the mercy of God, than in the firm and consistent representations of the New Testament—which overlooks the existence of the disease altogether, and therefore feels no alarm, and exerts no urgency in the business—which, in the face of all the truths and all the severities that are uttered in the Word of God, leaves the soul to its chance; or, in other words, by neglecting to administer any thing specific for the salvation of the soul, leaves it to perish. We do not want to involve you in controversies; we only ask you to open the New Testament, and attend to the obvious meaning of a word which occurs frequently in its pages—we mean the word *saved*. The term surely implies, that the present state of the thing to be saved, is a lost and undone state. If a tree be in a healthful state from its infancy, you never apply the term saved to it, though you see its beautiful foliage, its flourishing blossoms, its abundant produce, and its progressive ascent through all the varieties incidental to a sound and a prosperous tree. But if it were diseased in its infancy, and ready to perish, and if it were restored by management and artificial applications, then you would say of this tree that it was *saved*; and the very term implies some previous state of uselessness and corruption. What, then, are we to make of the frequent occurrence of this term in the New Testament, as applied to a human being? If men come into this world pure and innocent; and have nothing more to do but to put forth the powers with which nature has endowed them, and so to rise through the progressive stages of virtue and excellence, to the rewards of immortality, you would not say of these men that they were saved when they were translated to these rewards. These rewards of man are the natural effects of his obedience, and the term *saved* is not at all applicable to such a supposition. But the God of the Bible says differently. If a man obtain heaven at all, it is by being saved. He is in a diseased state; and it is by the healing application of the blood of the Son of God, that he is restored from that state. The very title applied to Him proves the same thing. He is called *our Saviour*. The deliverance which He effects is called our salvation. The men whom He doth deliver are called the *saved*. Doth not this imply some previous state of disease and helplessness? And from the frequent and incidental occurrence of this term, may we not gather an additional testimony to the truth of what is elsewhere more expressly revealed to us, that we are lost by nature, and that to obtain recovery, we must be found in Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost? He that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved; but he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.

We know that there are some who loathe this representation; but this is just another example of the substantial interests of the poor being sacrificed to mismanagement and delusion. It is to be hoped that there are many who have looked the disease fairly in the face, and are ready to reach forward the remedy

adapted to relieve it. We should have no call to attend to the spiritual interests of men, if they could safely be left to themselves, and to the spontaneous operation of those powers with which it is supposed that nature has endowed them. But this is not the state of the case. We come into the world with the principles of sin and condemnation within us; and, in the congenial atmosphere of this world's example, these ripen fast for the execution of the sentence. During the period of this short but interesting passage to another world, the remedy is in the gospel held out to all; and the freedom and universality of its invitations, while it opens assured admission to all who will, must aggravate the weight and severity of the sentence to those who will not; and upon them the dreadful energy of that saying will be accomplished,—"How shall they escape if they neglect so great a salvation?"

We know part of your labours for the eternity of the poor. We know that you have brought the Bible into contact with many a soul. And we are sure this is suiting the remedy to the disease; for the Bible contains those words which are the power of God through faith unto salvation, to every one who believes them.

To this established instrument for working faith in the heart, add the instrument of hearing. When you give the Bible, accompany the gift with the living energy of a human voice—let prayer, and advice, and explanation, be brought to act upon them; and let the warm and deeply-felt earnestness of your hearts, discharge itself upon theirs in the impressive tones of sincerity, and friendship and good will. This is going substantially to work. It is, if I may use the expression, bringing the right element to bear upon the case before you; and be assured, that every treatment of a convinced and guilty mind is superficial and ruinous, which does not lead it to the Saviour, and bring before it His sacrifice and atonement, and the influences of that Spirit bestowed through His obedience on all who believe on Him.

While in the full vigour of health, we may count it enough to take up with something short of this. But—striking testimony to evangelical truth! go to the awful reality of a human soul on the eve of its departure from the body, and you will find that all those vapid sentimentalities which partake not of the substantial doctrine of the New Testament, are good for nothing. Hold up your face, my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. Be not ashamed of its phraseology. It is the right instrument to handle in the great work of calling a human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the Word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science, must give way before its overbearing authority. Walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, in the twofold office of caring for the disease of the body, and administering to the wants of the soul; and though you may fail in the former—though the patient may never rise and walk, yet, by the blessing of heaven upon your fervent and effectual endeavours, the latter object may be gained—the soul may be lightened of all its anxieties—the whole burden of its diseases may be swept away—it may be of good cheer, because its sins are forgiven—and the right direction may be impressed upon it which will carry it forward in progress to a happy eternity. Death may not be averted, but death may be disarmed. It may be stripped of its terrors, and instead of a devouring enemy, it may be hailed as a messenger of triumph.

SERMON XXXV.

On Preaching to the Common People.

"And the common people heard him gladly."—MARK xii. 37.

Two discourses might be framed on this text—one addressed to the preachers of sermons, and another to the hearers of sermons. The great topic of the first should be the example of our Saviour as a preacher; and the great topic held out should be that He preached to the delight and acceptance of the common people. There is no doubt the vanity of popular applause; but there is also the vanity of an ambitious eloquence, which throws the common people at a distance from our instructions altogether; which, in laying itself out for the admiration of the tasteful and enlightened few, locks up the bread of life from the multitude; which destroys this essential attribute of the gospel, that it is a message of glad tidings to the poor; and wretchedly atones by the wisdom of words, for the want of those plain and intelligible realities which all may apprehend and by which all may be edified. Now the great aim of our ministry is to win souls; and the soul of a poor man consists of precisely the same elements with the soul of a rich. They both labour under the same disease, and they both stand in need of the same treatment. The physician who administers to their bodies brings forward the same application to the same malady; and the physician who is singly intent on the cure of their souls will hold up to both the same peace-speaking blood, and the same sanctifying Spirit, and will preach to both in the same name, because the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. If he do otherwise, then is he preaching himself, instead of giving an entire and honest aim to the management of the case that is before him; and does the same provoking injustice to his hearers with the physician, who expends his visit in playing off the pedantry of airs and manners before the eyes of his agonizing patient—when he should be binding up his wounds, or letting him know in plain language a plain and practicable remedy.

We hear of the orator of fashion, the orator of the learned, the orator of the mob. A minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ should be none of these; and, if an orator at all, it should be his distinction that he is an orator of the species. He should look beyond the accidental and temporary varieties of our condition; and recognise in every one who comes within his reach, the same affecting spectacle of a soul forfeited by sin, and that can only be restored by one Lord, one faith, one baptism. In the person of Nicodemus, it is likely, that both wealth and learning stood before the Saviour; but to His eye, these appear to have been paltry and perishable distinctions. He took up this case in precisely the same way that He would have done the case of one of the common people. They both laboured under the malignity of the same disease; and both, to be made meet for the inheritance, had to undergo the same regeneration. The varieties of fortune and accomplishment were of no importance at all in His argument. They were utterly insignificant as to the great purpose which He had in view. He reasoned on the great elements of flesh and spirit, in which rich and poor are alike implicated; and when he described the mighty transition from the one to the other, it was not a flowery path to heaven to which he pointed the eye of the Jewish ruler, to be trodden only by him and his companions in fortune and in fine sentiment. It is the one and universal path for every son and daughter of Adam, who have all to undergo the same death, and to stand before the same judgment-seat, and to inherit their undying portion, whether of weal or of wo, in the same eternity. In the view and consideration of such mighty interests as these, we should give up the partial and

insignificant distinctions of time and of society, between one member of the great human family and another. They are men and the souls of men that we have to deal with; and let it be our single aim to deal with them plainly, impressively, and faithfully.

It is true that ere we completed our lesson to the preachers of sermons, we behoved to advert to another principle, for which we have the sanction of apostolic example, even that of Paul, who was all things to all men, that he might gain some. But we must now hasten to address the hearers of sermons. It was saying more for the common people of Judea that they heard the Saviour gladly, than for the Scribes and Pharisees who heard him with envy, prejudice, and opposition; and it is saying more for the common people of this country, that they hear the doctrine of Christ gladly, than for those learned who call that doctrine foolishness, for those men of taste who call it fanaticism, for those men of this world who call it a methodistical reverie, for those men of fashion and fine sentiment, who shrink from the peculiarities of our faith, with all the disgust of irritated pride and offended delicacy. What the common people of Judea were in reference to the rulers of Judea, many of the common people of our day are in reference to the majority, we fear, of those who are to be met with in the walks of genteel and cultivated life—the scoffers and Sabbath breakers of the day, or the men perhaps who take a kind of religion along with them, but take it in moderation; who think that to strike the high tone of Christ and his apostles would be to carry the matter too far; who think that a great deal of what is said about sin and the sacrifice for sin is only meet for vulgar ears; who hear a sermon because it is decent to be exemplary; and who even read a sermon, and will read it to the end, if it carry them gently along through the rich and beauteous track of a polished composition; but who would be very ready to throw it aside if it alarm too much their fears, or tell too much with energy upon their consciences. Now, we are willing to acquit those who are here present of all these unchristian peculiarities. We are willing to think that both the doctrine of Scripture and the language of Scripture are agreeable to you, and that you do not feel as if either the one or the other could be carried too far; that there is no false taste, no lofty imagination about you, disposing you to resist the fulness or simplicity of the New Testament; and that the voice of the preacher never falls more sweetly upon your ears, than when he tells of the great things which the Saviour hath done for you.

Now, it is well that, like the common people of our text, you hear the word with gladness; but we want to impress it upon you that something more than this is indispensable. We are jealous over you, and we trust with a godly jealousy. We fear that there are many who are satisfied with a mere liking for the sound of Christian doctrine in their ears, while utter strangers to the influence of Christian doctrine in their hearts: who think it enough that they have a taste for the faith, while they give no proof of obedience to the faith; who are mere hearers of the word, but not doers of the word; who feel as if the great use of a sermon was to hear it, and to judge of it, and if they are pleased, to approve of it, and then, with them, the great purpose for which said sermon was delivered is forthwith accomplished. There is no more of it. It is like a business settled and set by. The minister preached and the people were pleased, and there is an end of the affair. They go back to their homes and their merchandise and they go just as they came, carrying along with them not one trace of a living impression on their hearts, their principles, or their consciences. What they have heard may be talked of for some days, or remembered for some months but if in a week or a fortnight after it, the question is put, Can you tell of any actual or discernible fruit from this said sermon? any closer fellowship with the Saviour in consequence of it? any of the effects upon the man which never fail to accompany this fellowship? any dying unto sin? any fervent desires after righteousness? any pressing forward to the accomplishments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord? any greater devotedness to the business of sanctification? any reformation of thieves or drunkards? any visible influence on the

peace and order of families? any breaking down of that worldly spirit which is enough of itself to prove the enmity of man to his God, though there were no outward or declared profligacy in any of his actions? any dissolving of this enmity?—in a word, any one evidence that we can point our finger to, that this faith which is so much professed and so much talked of, is working by love?—is making the soul a fit habitation for God by His Spirit?—is bringing down the fulfilment of the promise upon it, even the Holy Ghost given to those who should believe? whereby the old man is destroyed, the body of sin is mortified, all former vanities have passed away; and the whole man, brought under the dominion of a new and a better principle, rises every day in purity and loveliness of character, to a meetness for the society of angels, for the presence of God, for the holy exercises of heaven, for the delights of an unfading immortality.

Apply these questions to a very fond and delighted hearer; and how often may we find that the thing which gave so much pleasure to the itching ears of the man, has not had the weight of a straw on the man himself! It plays like music upon his ear; but it does not enter with the subduing energy of conviction into his heart. Follow him through all the business of his varied relations at home or in society, and you see him to be substantially the same man as before,—with all his old principles and practices about him—living his wonted life of indulgence to himself, and at as great a distance as ever from the new habit of living to the Saviour who died for him. His soul persists in all the unmoved obstinacy of its alienation from God. It still bends to the earth, and is earthly. Time and the interests of time retain all their wonted ascendancy over it. The Judge of the secrets of the inner man sees his heart to be as alive as ever to the world, and as dead in affection as ever to the things which are above. O, he is still the old man, and still persisting in the deeds of it. The love of the world, which is opposite to the love of the Father,—the selfishness of diseased nature, which is opposite to the charity of the gospel, are still the supreme and the urging principles of his constitution; and they tell us that the voice of the preacher has had no more effect upon him, than the lullaby of a nurse's song.

We are forcibly carried to this train of reflection by the passage which lies before us. The common people heard our Saviour gladly; and what, we ask, became of these common people? To-day the mob of Jerusalem left the hosannahs of a far-sounding popularity—a few days more, and they call out to crucify Him. His admirers became His murderers: and they who at one time heard Him gladly, at another are gladly consenting unto His death. In a few years Jerusalem was given up to the avenging hand of the adversary; and these wicked men, who at one time hung with delight upon the preaching of the Saviour, were miserably destroyed. The plea that they had eaten and drunken in His presence, and that He had taught in their streets, was of no avail to them. It did not save them from the awful doom of the workers of iniquity; and they who at one time were the admirers and the delighted hearers of our Saviour's doctrine, were at another the victims of His wrath.

What was the principle of this wondrous revolution in their sentiments respecting Christ? We shall confine ourselves to one summary expression of it. The whole explanation of the matter lies here. They are willing enough for the time being to follow the Saviour; but they would not follow Him upon His terms, and when these terms came to be understood, they drew back from following Him. He had before said, that "he who followeth after me must forsake all;" and these Jewish hearers, when put to the trial, would not forsake their national vanity, would not forsake their worldly prospects of interest and aggrandisement, would not forsake their fond anticipations of a temporal prince to protect and to deliver them. While these agreeable prospects were full in their eye, they followed Him; but when these prospects vanished, and it came to denying themselves, and taking up their cross, they ceased from following Him. They listened to Him with delight when He told them how Christ was greater than David; but why? because they looked forward to the earthly felicities of a still more prosperous reign, and a still prouder

era in their history. It was all, it would appear, a matter of selfishness. They aspired after a share in the glories of their anticipated monarchy, and rejoiced in the near view of those privileges which they conceived to lie before them: but when, instead of privileges, it came to persecution,—when, instead of honour, it came to humiliation,—when, instead of soft and silken security, it came to sacrifices, to sufferings and self-denial,—they shrunk from it altogether; and, by falling away from the contest on earth, they forfeited the crown in heaven.

And there are other examples of the same thing in the Bible. It is said of Herod that he heard John the Baptist gladly, and that he observed him in many things. But he did not observe nor follow him in all things. He did not come up to the principle of forsaking all. He would not forsake his unhallowed connexion with his brother's wife; and when put to this proof of his self-denial, he imprisoned the prophet, and beheaded him.

The rich man who came with the question to our Saviour about the way to eternal life heard Him with pleasure, so long as He did not touch upon his favourite affection. There was no self-denial in keeping himself from those sins to which he felt no temptation; and he listened with patient satisfaction to the recital of those commandments, all of which he had been led by his circumstances or his natural disposition to keep from his youth up. But when the principle of "he that followeth after me must forsake all," was applied to his besetting sin, he could not stand it He could not find it in his heart to slay or to renounce this idol He could not give up the service of the one master, or make an entire and unexpected dedication of himself to the service of the other; and the same man who heard Him gladly at one part of His instructions, went away from the other question exceeding sorrowful, and withdrew his footsteps from that following of the Lord fully, by which alone we can obtain an entrance into the kingdom of God.

In the parable of the sower, there are men spoken of who heard the word with joy; but, as a proof that the joyful hearing of the word is one thing and the effectual receiving of it is another, these men fell away. Persecution came, and by and by they were offended. They at first resolved to follow the Saviour; but the term of forsaking all was what they had not strength of purpose, nor depth of principle for acting up to. They gave way in the hour of temptation; and, rather than forsake their ease or their life or their fortune, they gave up all part and lot in the inheritance.

But, can there be a more striking example of this than at the preaching of the apostles after the resurrection? All Jerusalem was filled with their doctrine, and that doctrine was listened to with indulgence and pleasure. It is true that the interested men took the alarm at it; but set aside these, and we are told that they were in favour with all the people. If an apostle preached, he was at no loss for a multitude, and an approving multitude too, to gather around him, and hang upon him with admiration and delight. Had there been as many Christians as delighted hearers among them, Jerusalem would have been the most Christian city that ever flourished on the face of the earth. It looked so fair and so promising, when every street poured forth its multitudes, and they all ran together to the apostles, glorifying God for all which they heard and saw. Some were added to the church of such as should be saved. But they were a mere handful to the population of the devoted city. They were a mere gleaning among that number who kept in awe the high-priest and the council of Jerusalem, and restrained their violence against the first ministers of the New Testament. Yes, they were favourite ministers at that time, men of vast acceptance and popularity; and, if to hear the word gladly with the ear were the same thing as to receive the influence of that word into the heart, the vengeance of a rejected Saviour might have been averted from Jerusalem. But, alas! the hearers of that time must have been like many of the hearers of the present day. They heard, and they were pleased; but they would not forsake all to follow. They were afraid of excommunication, and they clung by their synagogues. They would not forsake the approbation of their priests, and the protection of their rulers. They clung by the superstitions, by the iniquities, by the bigotries of Je-

rusalem; and with Jerusalem they perished.

What does all this teach us? Let us come to the application. The gospel under which we sit has two great articles. By the one, we are invited to faith; by the other, we are called to repentance. By the one, we are offered the remission of our sins; by the other, we are called upon for the renunciation of our sins. By the one, we are told of a salvation, of which, if we accept, we shall be reconciled and taken into full acceptance with God. By the other, we are told of a salvation, of which, if we accept, we shall be regenerated by the operation of the Spirit of God. By the one, we are graciously assured that, if we turn to Christ as into a stronghold, we shall be safe; and the storm of the Divine wrath will utterly pass us by. By the other, we are solemnly warned that, in turning to Christ, we must turn from our iniquities—else if the Judge find us in these on the great day of reckoning, the fury both of a violated law and an insulted gospel will be let loose upon us, and we borne off as by a whirlwind to the horrors of an undone eternity. Now, the whole secret of such an exhibition as was made by the common people at Jerusalem, and as may still be realized by the people of the present day, is, that they like the one article, they dislike the other,—glad enough to take all that God offers, but not so glad to perform all that God requires,—giving their delighted consent to the one, refusing it to the other,—and thus running with delight after those men of popularity and acceptance who tell them of the faith of the New Testament, but falling away with disaffection and distaste when told of the repentance of the New Testament. They are joyful hearers of the word; but our question is, are they the obedient doers of it? O, it is pleasant to be told of heaven; and, amidst the agitations of this earthly wilderness, to have the eye carried forward to that place of quietness.

But are you willing to take, or rather are you actually taking the prescribed road to heaven—though that road should lead you through manifold trials and manifold tribulations?—It is soothing to listen to the preacher's voice, when he tells you to rest in the sufficiency of the Saviour. Are you building any thing upon this foundation? If you rest on the sufficiency of Christ, you will receive of that sufficiency. He will make His grace sufficient for you; and, perfecting His strength in your weakness, He will make you run with delight in the way of new obedience.—It is delightful to be told of the privileges of the Christian faith. Are you proving yourselves to be in the faith? It is not a name, but a principle. It is not a thing to be merely talked of. It is like the kingdom of heaven to which it carries you—not in word, but in power; and then only does it work with power, when it works by love and keeps the commandments.—It is indeed a welcome sound upon a sinner's ear that he is justified by the righteousness of Christ. O, it is a faithful saying; and the only plea upon which we have access with confidence to God. But he who is justified is also sanctified, is another faithful saying; and let us come to close questioning with you—are you, or are you not, in the strength of God's promised Spirit, making the business of your sanctification a daily and hourly and ever-doing business?—You like to follow the minister who preaches Christ; and, in going after him, you have forsaken all the legalists, all the mere men of morality, all the self-sufficient expounders of that righteousness which is by the law. But what we ask is—do you follow Christ, and that with an entire devotedness to Him and to Him only? And, in following after Him, do you forsake all? In turning to Him, do you turn from your iniquities? In yielding yourselves up unto His service, do you renounce the service of sin and of the world?—for, if not, you are like the common people of Jerusalem, and you will share in the judgment that came over them. You may hear gladly; but what does it avail, if you do not follow faithfully? Jerusalem which they lived in was destroyed; and they were destroyed along with it. The world which you live in will be destroyed also; and when the Judge cometh, the plea which many of the lovers of orthodoxy may lift up, will not serve them—"Lord, we have eaten and drunken of thy sacraments, and pleasant to our souls was the voice of thy messengers." But then will I

answer to them, "I never knew you; depart from me all ye that work iniquity."

But, in sounding the alarm, it should be our care that it reach far enough; and we apprehend of this denunciation that we have now uttered against the children of iniquity—that many are the consciences, even of those now present, who may not be rightly or fully affected by it When we speak of those who work iniquity, to the fair and passable men of society, they never once think of including themselves in this description; but their thoughts go abroad to thieves, and drunkards, and defrauders; and, applying to them the declaration of Scripture, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," they lull their own spirits into a deep slumber. But we fall short of our aim, if we do not awaken them too out of this fatal security; if we do not break up this prevalent delusion; if we do not reach conviction into other hearts than those of gross and notorious offenders. We look not for theft or drunkenness among men of honour and decency and respect in their neighbourhood—yet would we open their eyes too to their state of spiritual nakedness, and tell them how it is that even they are workers of iniquity. To them belongs that most damning of all iniquity, the iniquity of a heart alienated from God. It is the heart wherewith He has principally to do; and "give me thy heart" is the first and greatest of His commandments. The evil things which come out of it may be more or less visible to the eye of the world; but He does not need to look to the stream, for His penetrating eye reaches to the fountain-head. The world may not see you to be a thief or a drunkard; but He sees you, and takes note of you as an enemy of His. He sees in that heart of yours, the hourly, and the habitual guilt of spiritual idolatry. He sees the whole current of its affections and wishes to be away from Himself, and fully directed to the vanities and interests of the world. He sees the praise of men more sought after than is His praise; and, with the outside of plausibility which you maintain before the eye of your fellows, He, the discerner of your thoughts and intents, may see how other things are more loved and followed than God. It is the heart that He looks to; and well does He see its bent and its tendency, through all the ambiguities by which you deceive and satisfy your own unfaithful conscience. He takes knowledge of it when you are too busy with your own way and your own counsel to take knowledge of it yourselves. He follows it through the secrecy of all its hidden movements; nor does it escape His notice when it disowns Him, and goes in quest of other Gods—when it casts Him off and worships idols—when it renounces the true God, and makes a God of wealth, a God of vanity, a God of pleasure, and as many more Gods as there are allurements from Himself in this deceitful world. Not a worker of iniquity, because you do not steal! Why, you rob God of the property which belongs to Him, of His own rightful property in the hearts and affections of His own children. Not a worker of iniquity, because, in the form or the outward matter of it, you break not the sixth or the eighth commandment? Why, you live in habitual violation of the first and greatest commandment, which is, "love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and strength, and mind." Not a worker of iniquity, because you do nothing which the world can point its finger to? Because you escape the finger of the world, does it follow that you can escape the eye of God? He sees you to be a rebel against Himself; and, with that heart of yours turned to its own vanities, with neither the enjoyment of God for its object, nor the love of God for its principle; be assured that it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and is fully set in you to do that which is evil.

The maxim, then, of forsaking all to follow after Christ, reaches a great deal farther than to the notoriously profligate. It must go round among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It is not confined to the visible doings of the hand, but carries its authority over the whole man, and claims more especially an absolute dominion among the affections and wishes and tastes of the inner man. He who hears gladly to-day, and lies or steals or defrauds to-morrow, is not the only man that we are aiming at. He who hears gladly to-day, and to-morrow gives his soul to any of the perishable idols of time,

instead of devoting it with all its longings and energies to God, is fully included in the lesson which we are now giving to you. Delighted with the sermon, we grant you, but not one inch of progress made toward the clean heart and the right spirit. Lulled, Sabbath after Sabbath, as if by the sound of a pleasant song, or of one who can play well upon an instrument—and yet the old man persisting in all the unsubdued obstinacy of his deep and inborn principles. Rejoicing once a-week in the house of God, as if it were the gate of heaven—yet the whole week long, giving his entire heart to the world, and resting all his security upon the world's wealth, and the world's enjoyments. Running after gospel ministers, and sitting in all the complacency of approbation under them—and yet an utter stranger to the devotedness, to the spirituality, to the close walk, and the godly spirit of the altogether-Christian. O my brethren, it bids so flattering to hear the city bells, and to see every house pouring forth its family of worshippers—to look upon the avenue which leads to the house of prayer, and see it all in a glow with the crowd and bustle of passengers—to enter the church, and see every eye fastened attentively on the man of God, as he tells of the high matters of salvation, and presses home the preparations of eternity upon an arrested audience. O, if the charmed ear were a true and unfailing index to the subdued heart, the business of the minister would go on so prosperously! But there is a power of resistance within that is above his exertions and beyond them—there is a spirit working in the children of disobedience which no power of human eloquence can lay—there is an obstinate alienation from God, which God alone can subdue; and, unless He make a willing people in the day of His power, the influence of the preacher's lesson will die away with the music of his voice—the old man will be carried out as vigorous and entire as he was carried in—the word spoken may play upon the fancy, but it will not reach the deeply-seated corruption which lies in the affections and the will—the seriousness which sits so visible on every countenance, will vanish into nothing in half an hour—the men of the world, and the things of the world, will engross and occupy the room that is now taken up with something like Christianity—and all will be dissipated into a thing of nought, when you go to your shops and your forms and your families and your market-places.

But we must now draw to a close, and will lay before you a few things in the way of practical application.

I. First, then, we have no quarrel with you because you are of the number of those who hear gladly. This is so far well. It is one of the deadliest symptoms of those who perish, that to them the preaching of the cross is foolishness. If such be your indifference or aversion to the word of God, if such be your contempt for the opportunities of hearing it—that, now when they are brought week after week within your reach, you will nevertheless turn in distaste and dissatisfaction away—if you prefer a Sabbath on the way-side, or a Sabbath in the fields, or a Sabbath in sordid indolence and dissipation at home, to a Sabbath in the solemn assembly of worshippers—Then will it sorely aggravate your condemnation in the great day of account, that you refused to listen to the word when the word was brought nigh unto you—that, rather than hear the word by which you and your families might have been saved, you chose to perish for lack of knowledge, even that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is life everlasting—that when the ministers of the Most High lifted their beseeching voice, you regarded them not—that you preferred taking your own pleasure now, reckless of the awful day of account and of punishment that is to come afterwards, even that day when the Judge from heaven shall appear in flaming fire, "to take vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." Better than this surely is it that you should hear the word gladly, and that you should rejoice when friends and companions say, "Let us go up to the house of God." We have no quarrel, then, we repeat, with your being of the number of those who are the glad hearers of the word. Are there any here

present who recollect the day when the language of the gospel was offensive to them, but who now listen to it with eagerness and delight? A very promising symptom most assuredly; and it may evidence the beginning of a good work which God may carry forward and bring to perfection.

II. But secondly, though your hearing gladly be a promising symptom, it is not an infallible one. The common people of Jerusalem heard gladly; and we need not repeat the awful disaster and ruin which, in the course of a few years, overtook the families of that common people—so that their old and their middle-aged, and their little ones, were miserably destroyed. Herod heard gladly. The men who fell away in the parable of the sower heard gladly, and you may hear gladly yet fall short of the kingdom of God. "Be not high minded but fear." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The apostle tells how far a man might proceed in the characteristics and evidences of a seeming Christianity, and yet fall irrecoverably away. One of these characteristics is a taste for the good word of God; but this, so far from being of any avail to the presumptuous backslider serves the more to fix and to aggravate his doom—the doom of a perdition from which there is no possibility of a recall, it being impossible, he tells us, "to renew them again unto repentance." Keep fast then what you have gotten, and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die.

III. But though to hear gladly be not an infallible symptom, yet to hear the whole truth gladly is a much more promising symptom than only to hear part of the truth gladly. We fear that it is this partial liking for the word which forms the whole amount of their affection for it, with the great majority of professing Christians. They like one part; but they do not like another. Some like to hear of the privileges of the gospel; but they do not like to hear of the precepts of the gospel, and that the soul in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory, will purify itself even as Christ is pure. This partial liking, so far from a promising symptom, we count to be a very dangerous one. It is dividing Christ. It is putting asunder the things which God hath joined. It is giving the lie to his testimony; and making our own taste and our own inclination take the precedency of God's word and of God's way. Make it a high point of duty to listen with equal reverence and satisfaction to all God's communications. Do you listen with delight to the minister, when he tells you to follow after Christ? Listen with equal delight to the minister, when he tells you that in following after Christ you must forsake all. If this truth offend you merely when it is spoken, how much more will it offend you when you have a call for its being acted on?—and thus will you fall precisely under that description of hearers, who hear with joy, but when temptation comes, by and by they are offended. Do you listen with delight to a sermon upon the privileges of faith, and how that all who have it shall inherit the kingdom? Listen with equal delight to a sermon on the properties and influences of faith; and when it tells you how it is a faith which worketh, working by love, purifying the heart, overcoming the world. Do you listen with delight to a sermon on the freeness of grace; and when it tells you how it is offered to all, and that all who will may take of it without money and without price? Listen with equal delight to a sermon on the power and efficacy of grace—telling how it frees all who are under it from the dominion of sin, how it worketh mightily in the souls of believers, how it raises them to newness of life, and strengthens them for all the duties and performances of the new creature—not only teaching all men, but enabling all men who lay hold of it, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. It looks as if it were to guard us against this partial liking for the word of God, that these two great articles of Christianity, what man receives from God and what God requires of man, under the dispensation of the gospel,—that both of these are often placed together, side by side, within the enclosure of one and the same verse; so as both to be taken up at one glance of the eye by him who reads the verse, or expressed at one breath by him who ut

ters it. The call of our Saviour at the commencement of Mark is, "Repent and believe the gospel." The apostolic description of the great subjects of preaching is "repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." The office of the ascended Saviour is to "give repentance and the remission of sins" The privileges of the believer are that to him "there is no condemnation;" and he walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit." As many as receive Christ, we are told, receive along with him "power to walk as God's children." They who are in Christ we are again told are "new creatures." And lastly do we read of God being faithful and just—not only "to forgive our sins but to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. Such passages are innumerable. Let us have our eye alike open upon them all. Let us proceed upon them all—combining delight in the securities of the Christian faith, with diligence in the Christian practice.

IV. But lastly, if it do not follow that because a man is a delighted hearer of the word, he is therefore an obedient doer of it, how is he to become one? What is there which can bring relief to this melancholy helplessness? How wretched to think that the impression, so quick and lively in the house of God, should be so easily put to flight out of it; and should fall away into forgetfulness, when brought into actual collision with the influences of the world. The man's warmth and his elevation, and his swelling purposes of better things, look so promising; but bring him to the trial, and it all turns out like the vapouring of a coward. The one shows himself in the day of battle—the other in the day of temptation. He goes to his family after a sermon that he has heard, and becomes peevish, though one fruit of the Spirit be gentleness—he goes to an entertainment and becomes luxurious, though one fruit of the Spirit be temperance—he goes to a company and becomes censorious, though one fruit of the Spirit be the love that worketh no ill. In a word, he goes to any one scene of the world; and he loses all sense and feeling of the ever-present God—though the solemn requirement under which he lives is to do all things to His glory. Are we not speaking to your own experience; and may not the personal remembrance of every one of you spare us the task of any further argument, when we assert that the glow of a warm and affecting impression is one thing, and the sturdiness of an enduring principle is another?

We again then recur to the question, how shall we give the property of endurance to that which in time past has been so perishable and so momentary? The strength of your own natural purposes, it would appear, cannot do it. The power of argument cannot do it. The tongue of the minister, though he spake with the eloquence of an angel, cannot do it; and unless some power above and beyond all these be made to rest on you, he may speak to the delight of a crowded assembly, and it will be of no more avail than if he lifted up his voice in the wilderness. But you have met together in the name of one who has promised to be in the midst of you; and He can do it. He alone can deposit in your hearts that seed which remaineth; and come down upon you with an unction from the Holy One never to be obliterated. What He puts in you will abide in you; and it will enable you to stand amid the conflicts of the world, and the rudest shock of its temptations. If the Spirit of Christ be in you, then greater will be He that is in you than he that is in the world; and let your experience of the past, and the feeling of your former helplessness, shut you up into the faith of Him. If you commit yourself in faith to Him, He will not fail you. His promises are yea and amen; and if they are not realized upon you, it is because you do not believe in them, because you do not depend on them, because you do not wait and pray for the performance of them.

Mark here, my brethren, the efficacy and the indispensableness of prayer. It is the link which cements and binds together the sermon of the minister, with its living and practical effect on the consciences and conduct of the people. Of such essential importance is it, that the apostles made as great account of prayer, as they did of the ministry of the word; and so they gave themselves wholly to both. But for prayer, all our anticipations of a great Christian blessing in the midst of this people and from the services

of this Church will come to mockery. It is right that these means should be provided; but the whole enterprise will be a miserable abortion, if we devolve not the work upon God—so as both to seek from Him the blessing, and give to Him all the glory of it. More especially, if at all in earnest about your personal Christianity, I would have you to understand—that, without prayer, prompted by a sense of your own helplessness, and a confidence in the sufficiency of Christ Jesus as your strength and your sanctifier, it will be impossible to realize it. The way is to make an hourly and habitual commitment of yourself to Him; and He will keep in hourly and habitual safety that which is so committed. He hath obtained for you a great blessing, and to which all of you are most welcome, in having purchased forgiveness for you; but, in the fulness of His treasury, there is still another blessing in store for all who believe on Him. He came to bless every one of you by turning you from your iniquities. Keep closely and constantly by Him in faith; and he will keep closely and constantly by you with the power of His grace—giving not only mercy to pardon, but grace to help in every time of need. He will carry you in safety through the concerns and companies of the world. He overcame the world himself; and He will enable you to forsake all, and to overcome it also. Abide in Him, and the promise is that He will abide in you. Separate from Him, you become a withered branch without fruit and without loveliness. But, abiding in Him, you are formed into His image—you rise in the likeness of His pure and perfect example—you will at all times hear gladly, but not after the example of the common people of Judea. Yours will be a sincere thirst after the milk of His word, not that you may be pleased with the taste of it, but that you may grow thereby—and thus will you give evidence both to God and man of your interest in the Saviour, by being not merely the hearers of the word but the doers also.

We now proceed to the collection of the funds for this our new undertaking; and, in order to engage your affections the more to our cause, we should like that you fully and precisely understood the object of it. The place of worship in which we are now assembled for the first time, is not adequately described to you, by its being merely told, that, like other and ordinary chapels heretofore, it forms an addition to the means of Christian instruction in or about Edinburgh. It has a far more special destination than this; and such as we should like to see extended over town and country, till there was not only Sabbath-room enough, but week-day service enough for one and all of the families of our land. It is a church then erected, mainly and primarily, for the accommodation of the people who reside within the limits of the district in which it is placed. They have the choice of its seats in the first instance; and our only regret is, that till government do its duty, we shall not be able to afford them at rents so low, as to admit of their being taken in greater numbers, and, if possible, in household pews, not only for the men and women, but even for the children of the working classes—that the people might come, not merely by individuals, but in whole families to the house of God; and the spectacle be again realized in towns, which might still be witnessed in country parishes, where high and low meet together, and the congregation, though sprinkled over with a few of rank and of opulence, is chiefly made up of our men of handicraft and of hard labour. There is none we think of correct moral taste, and whose heart is in its right place, that will not rejoice in such a spectacle, as far more pleasing in itself, and, if only universal in our churches, far more indicative of a healthful state of the community, than the wretched system of the present day, when the gospel is literally sold to the highest bidders among the rich, and not preached to the poor. And the melancholy consequence is, the irreligion, the ignorance, the reckless habits, and prostrate morality of a neglected population—of a population at the same time sunk both in comfort and character, only because they are neglected; and who would nobly repay, as our experience in this place abundantly testifies, any justice that was done, or any attentions that were rendered to them. The process of our operations is an exceed-

ingly simple one. Instead of leaving this church to fill as it may from all parts of the town, we first hold out the seats that we have to dispose of, at such prices as we can afford to its own parish families—which families, at the same time, have previously opened their doors, and given their welcome to those ministerial yet household services, those visits of Christian charity to the sick and the dying, those labours for the best because the spiritual interests of themselves and their little ones, wherewith they are incessantly plied through the week; and, in consequence of which, it is our fond expectation and desire, that the attention of the house-going minister will be followed by the attendance of a church-going people. We do hope that this plain statement will recommend itself to your liberality; and that we shall be helped by you to clear away the debt, and to overcome the difficulties which still attach to our undertaking. The original subscribers look for no return, no remuneration to themselves. Theirs has been an unreserved gift; and not one farthing of repayment, whether in principal or in interest, has ever been looked for by any of them. By the generosity of their individual offerings, the main expense of the erection has been defrayed; and, for the liquidation of the remaining expense we now cast ourselves on the collective offerings of those who desire to see a good cause placed on the footing of a permanent and secure establishment, and freed from all the embarrassments of a still unfinished and unpaid-for operation. Our fond wish for Edinburgh and for its environs is—that, district after district, new churches may arise and old ones be thrown open to their own parish families, till not one house remains which has not within its walls some stated worshipper in one or other of our Christian assemblies; and not one individual can be pointed to, however humble and unknown, who has not some man of God for his personal acquaintance, some Christian minister for his counsellor and friend.

The afternoon service is postponed till evening; and the reason of this postponement may be well called a very singular one, on which certainly we were not at all counting, when we had resolved to open our church this day—an annular eclipse of the sun, and where the greatest amount of darkness would happen in the very middle of the exercise, or precisely at three o'clock; and so we fear as both to incommode the minister, and to disturb the congregation. We are unwilling to let this extraordinary event pass without some religious improvement; and what work or manifestation of Nature's God, who at the same time is the God of Christianity—sitting on a throne of grace as well as on the throne of creation and providence—the God who, in the language of the apostle's prayer in the book of Acts, "made heaven and earth and sea and all that is therein,"—what exhibition of this wonder-working God is not capable of being turned to the account of practical godliness? We should like you then to recognise it as one and the same lesson—that He who has established so much certainty in Nature, most true to Himself, hath established the like certainty in Revelation; that the one economy will be characterized by the same unchangeableness as the other—insomuch that, if we meet with so much constancy, so much to be relied upon in the works of God, there is at least as great a constancy and as much to be firmly and fully relied upon in the word of God. The covenant of the rainbow which marks the dispersion of the clouds, and clearing up of the weather, is not more sure, than that covenant of grace which forms the great charter of a Christian's hope, and of which we are told in the Bible that it is ordered in all things and sure. The eclipse of this day is one of the most rare and marvellous description, not what is termed a partial and not a total but an annular eclipse, in which the moon passes not over the edge, but centrally or almost centrally over the sun's disk—and so that, instead of covering that disk altogether and making the eclipse a total one, it leaves, and for four minutes only, a little ring of the solar orb peering out on all sides of the moon's darkened hemisphere—causing a fine and beauteous circle of light, all that is left for the brief space of four minutes to lighten up our world. The marvellous thing is, that all this should be known to men beforehand; that astronomers can tell the whole that is to

happen with such unfailing accuracy; that within a second of time they can announce when it is that the darkness will make its first entrance on the south-west edge of the sun, and when it is to a precise second that the last remainder of darkness will pass away from the north-east edge of it—and when and how long it is that the golden circuit will continue, of one delicate and unbroken line re-entering upon itself, and so completing for a few evanescent minutes an entire orb of luminousness in the heavens. It may well be marvelled at—the certainty of the science of man, or of him who is but the observer of the phenomenon. But remember well, that in order to this, there must be a previous certainty—the unchangeable certainty of Him who is the Creator of the phenomenon; and the unchangeableness of whose ordinances in the heavens, is the sure token and demonstration of the like unchangeableness of His purposes in the word. The calendar of prophecy is in every way as sure, as the almanac whether of history or of nature; and, in the unerring fulfilments of both, we may read alike the immutability and the faithfulness of God; of Him who hath said it, and shall He not do it?—and with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.

Think not, my brethren, that we entertain you with any fancy of our own. In Psalm cxix. 89, we are told of God's constancy in the heavens, being the sure guarantee of a like constancy in the word. Nay, my brethren, the one has a more unviolable constancy than the other—for heaven and earth shall pass away; but the word of God endureth for ever, and shall not pass away. What an emphasis then does it give to the lesson we have been labouring to urge, of attention, solemn and steadfast attention to that word—what firm, what unfaltering dependence should it establish in the mind of the believer, when he rests on the word of promise as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast—and with what a fearful looking for and certainty of the coming judgment should it fill the heart of the impenitent, when he thinks of the threatenings of God being as sure as His promises; of the laws of the divine government being in every way as certain of fulfilment, as the laws of nature which is the divine workmanship; and more especially, when he thinks of the law of revelation and the law of conscience with all the power and terror of their denunciations, against the children of iniquity—when he thinks of these in connexion with the saying of the Saviour, that "Heaven and earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail." When you look then to the spectacle of this day, lift up your heads ye faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and rejoice—for as sure or surer than the prediction of which you are now to witness the accomplishment, is the glorious prediction of Holy Writ that the day of your restoration draweth nigh: And O take warning ye careless and stout-hearted who are far from righteousness—for as sure or surer than that on this day the sun in the firmament will be shrouded in blackness, is the announcement of the apostle Peter who tells us of another day "when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" May you all be enabled to say with well grounded confidence in the language of the next verse, "Nevertheless we according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

SERMON XXXVI.*

On the Superior Blessedness of the Giver to that of the Receiver.

"I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts xx. 35.

John, at the end of his gospel, spoke of the multitude of other things which Jesus did, and which he could not find room for in the compass of His short history. Now, what is true of the doings of our Saviour, I hold to be equally true of the sayings of our Saviour. There are many thousands of these sayings not recorded. The four gospels were written within some years after His death, and though I have no doubt of the promise being accomplished upon the apostles, that the Spirit would bring all things to their remembrance, in virtue of which promise, we have all things told of Jesus necessary for our guidance here, and our salvation hereafter—yet I have as little doubt, when I think of the length and frequency of His conversations with the people around Him, that many, and very many of the gracious words which fell from His mouth, have not been transmitted to us in any written history whatever. They may have been kept alive by tradition for a few years. They may have been handed from one to another by mere oral communication. There is no doubt that they served every purpose for which they were uttered—but, in the lapse of one or two generations, they ceased to be talked of, and have now vanished from all earthly remembrance.

But there is one, and only one, of these sayings, which, though not recorded in any of the gospels, has escaped the fate of all the rest. In the course of its circulation among the disciples of that period, it reached the apostle Paul, and he has thought fit to preserve it. It seems to have obtained a general currency among Christians; for he speaks of it to the elders of Ephesus, as if they had heard of it before. He quotes it as a saying known to them as well as to himself. We have no doubt that it was held in reverence, and referred to, and might have been talked of for many years, in the churches. But it would at length have sunk into forgetfulness, with the crowd of other unrecorded sayings, had not Paul caught hold of it in its progress to oblivion; and, by placing it within the confines of written history, he has made it imperishable. It has got within the four corners of that book, of which it is said, "If any man take away from the words of it he shall be accursed." He was the Son of God who uttered it; and it is striking enough, that, when unnoticed and unrecorded by all the evangelists, the apostle of the Gentiles, born out of due time, was the instrument of transmitting it to posterity. Precious memorial! There was no chance of its ever being lost to the Christian church, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and without it the volume of inspiration would not have been completed. But surely the very circumstances of its being overlooked by the professed historians of our Saviour—of its being left for a time to fluctuate among all the chances, and all the uncertainties of verbal communications—of its being selected by the revered apostle of the Gentiles, from among the crowd of similar sayings which were suffered to perish for ever from the memory of the world—of his putting his hand upon it,

* This sermon was preached first for a Female Society in Dunfermline, in 1814; then for an Orphan Hospital; and lastly, for the society of The Sons of the Clergy, in Glasgow, in April, 1815. The three different conclusions of this sermon, mark the three different occasions on which it was preached; and also the sentiments of the author, in regard to the distinct objects which he was called upon to advocate. He may remark, that, after the experience of twenty-four years, he should feel disinclined to plead for the first of these objects, and even be doubtful in regard to the second—which he thinks occupies a mid-way or ambiguous place between the cases which might, and those which ought not to be provided for by public institutions.

and arresting its march to that forgetfulness to which it was so fast hastening—All these have surely the effect of endearing it the more to our hearts, and should lead the thoughtful Christian to look upon the words of my text, with a more tender and affecting veneration.

In discoursing from these words, I shall first direct your attention to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they may give; and, secondly, to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they must receive.

I will not attempt to draw the precise boundary between these two conditions. Each individual among you must determine the question for himself. It is not for me to sit in judgment upon your circumstances; but know that a day is coming, when all these secrets shall be laid open—and when the God who seeth every heart shall tell with unerring discernment, whether the selfishness of diseased nature or the charity of the gospel, had the rule over it.

I. First then, as to those Christians who occupy such a condition of life that they may give. It is more blessed for them to give than to receive. (1.) Because in so doing, they are like unto God; and to be formed again after his image, is the great purpose of the dispensation we sit under. We have nothing that we did not receive, but we cannot say so of God. He is the unfailing fountain out of which every thing flows. All originates in Him. A mighty tide of communication from God to His creatures, has been kept up incessantly from the first hour of creation. It flows without intermission. It spreads over the whole extent of the universe He has formed. It carries light, and sustenance, and enjoyment, through the wide dominions of Nature and of Providence. It reaches to the very humblest individual among His children. There is not one shred or fragment in the awful immensity of His works which is overlooked by Him; and, wonderful to tell, the same God whose arm is abroad over all worlds, has His eye fastened attentively upon every one of us, compasses all our goings, gives direction to every footstep, sustains us and holds us together through every minute of our existence—and, at the very time that we are living in forgetfulness of Him, walking in the counsel of our own hearts, and after the sight of our own eyes—is the universal Creator at the right hand of each and of all of us, to give us every breath which we draw, and every comfort which we enjoy.

Oh! but you may think it is nothing to Him, to open His hand liberally. He may give and give, and be as full as ever. He loses nothing by communication. But we cannot part with any thing to another, without depriving ourselves. Such an objection as this proceeds from an unscriptural view of God. In the eye of a cold natural theology, He is regarded as a Being who has nothing in Him answering to that which we feel in ourselves—when, by a laborious exercise of self-denial, we perform some great and painful act of liberality.

The theology of nature, or rather of the schools, makes an orderly distribution of the attributes of God; and, conceiving His power to be some kind of physical and resistless energy, it also conceives that He can accomplish every deed of benevolence however exalted it may be without so much as the feeling of a sacrifice. Now this I think is not the lesson of the Bible. He who hath seen the Father, and is alone competent to declare Him, gives me a somewhat different view of what I venture to call the constitution of the Deity. Does not He tell us, that to be kind to our friends is no great matter; and then He bids us be kind to our enemies, and upon what principle?—That we may be like unto God. Now in the exercise of kindness to enemies, there is something going on in our minds totally different, from what goes on in the exercise of kindness to friends; and I do not see the significancy of the argument at all, unless you grant me, that there must be a difference corresponding to this in the mind of the Deity. In the exercise of kindness to the man who hates you, there is a preference of his good to the indulgence of your own resentment—there is a victory over the natural tendencies of your constitution—there is a struggling with these tendencies—there is an act of forbearance—there is a triumph of the principle of love, over a painful and urgent sense of provocation. Now, if in all this we are like unto God, must there not be something similar to all

this in the benevolence of God? Or, in other words, there must be something in His character, corresponding to that which imparts a character of sublime elevation, to the meek and persevering charity of an injured Christian.

But again. When we are told that God so loved the world, as to send His only begotten Son into it, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life—what is the meaning of the emphatic *so?* It means nothing at all, if God, in the act of giving up His Son to death, did not make the same kind of sacrifice with the parent, who, amid the agonies of his struggling bosom, surrenders his only child at some call of duty or of patriotism. If it was at the bidding of God that Abraham entertained strangers, this was some proof of his love to Him. But it was a much higher proof of it that he so loved Him, as to be in readiness at His requirement, to offer up Isaac. Now there is something analogous to this in God. It proves His love to men, that He opens His hand, and feeds them all out of the exuberance which flows from it; but it is a higher proof of love that He so loved them as to give up His only begotten Son in their behalf.

And the argument loses all its impression, if God did not experience a something in His mind, corresponding to that which is felt by an earthly parent—when, keeping all the struggles of his natural tenderness under the control of principle, he gives up his son at the impulse of some pure and lofty requirement. Dismiss then my brethren all your scholastic conceptions of the Deity; and keep by that warm and affecting view of Him, that we have in the Bible. For if we do not, we will lose the impression of many of its most moving arguments; and our hearts will remain shut against its most powerful and pathetic representations of the character of God. To come back then upon this objection, that it is nothing to God to open His hand liberally, for He may give and give and be as full as ever. And does God make no sacrifice in the act of giving unto you? A pure and unfallen angel would not detract from the praises of His Creator—by language such as this. And what are you? A rebel to His laws, who will yet persist in saying, that God, by feeding you with His bounty, is making no sacrifice. Why, He is holding you up though you be a spectacle injurious to His honour. He is grieved with you every day, and yet every day He loads you with His benefits. Every sinner is an offence to Him, and what restrains Him from sweeping the offence away from the face of His creation altogether. It is of His mercies that you are not consumed—that He still bears with you—that He keeps you in life and in all that is necessary to life—that He holds on with you a little longer and a little longer—that He plies you with warnings and opportunities; and brings the voice of a beseeching God to bear upon you, calling you to turn and be reconciled and live—What! Has He never for your sakes, given up any thing that is dear and valuable to Himself? Did not He give up His Son to the death for you? All your gifts to the poor are nothing to this. When Abraham lifted up the knife over his son Isaac—he felt that he was making a mightier and more painful sacrifice, than by all his alms-deeds and hospitalities. God had compassion on the parental feelings of Abraham, and He spared them. But He spared not His own Son. He gave Him up for us all. And shall we when we give up a trifling proportion of our substance to the relief of our poorer brethren, talk of the sacrifice we are making—as if there was nothing like it in the benevolence of God? Talk not then of your deprivations and your sacrifices. But "be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Under this particular, I have one practical direction to come forward with. When you do an act of benevolence, think of the extent of the sacrifice you have made by it. It is a delightful exercise to be kind among people who have a sense of your kindness—to give away money, if you get an ample return of gratitude back again—to pay a visit of tenderness to the poor family, who load you with their acknowledgments and their blessings—when you are received with the smile of welcome; and soothed by the soft accents of the widow who prays for a reward upon you, or of the children who hail you as an angel of mercy. Oh, it is easy to move gently along, through such scenes and families

as these. But have a care, that you are not ministering all the while to your own indulgence and your own vanity; for then verily I say unto you "you have your reward." The charity of the gospel is not the fine and exquisite feeling of poetry. It is a sturdy and enduring principle. It carries you through the rough and discouraging realities of life, and it enables you to stand them; and it is only, my brethren, when you can be kind in spite of ingratitude—when you can give to the poor man, not because he thanks you, but because he needs it—when you can be unwearied in well-doing, amid all the bitterness of envy, and all the growlings of discontent—Then, and then only is it, that you endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ Jesus; or can be called the children of the Highest, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and sendeth down his rain on the just and on the unjust.

(2.) It is more blessed to give than to receive—for to give as a Christian, is to part with that which is temporal, and to show a preference for that which is eternal. By an alms-deed you give up part of this world's goods. By a piece of service, you give up a part of this world's ease. By an act of civility, you give up to another that time which might have been employed in the prosecution of some design or interest of your own. But, lest I flatter you into a delusive security, I again recur to the question "What is the extent of the sacrifice?" For I am well aware, that the part thus given up, may be so small, as to be no evidence whatever of a mind bent upon eternity. You may gratify your feelings of compassion at an expense so small, that you cannot be said to have made any sacrifice. You may gain the good-will of all your neighbours by this act of kindness, and count the purchase a cheap one. You may gratify your love of ostentation by an act of alms-giving, and do it upon as easy terms, as you gratify your love of amusement by an act of attendance upon the ball-room or the theatre. You may lay out your penny a-week, and be amply repaid for the sacrifice, by the distinction of being one of a society, and by the pleasure of sharing in the business of it. In all this you have your reward; but I do not yet see any evidence of a soul setting its affections upon the things above in all this. Oh! no my brethren! A benevolent society is a very pleasurable exhibition; and I trust that in the one I am now pleading for, there is much of that genuine principle which shrinks from the pollution of vanity. But were I to bestow that praise upon the mere act which only belongs to the principle, I might incur all the guilt of a lying prophet. I might be saying "Peace, peace when there is no peace." I might be proclaiming the praise of God, to him who had already sought and obtained his reward in the praise of man. I might be regaling with the full prospect of heaven, him whose heart tends to the earth, and is earthly—whose trifling charity has not the weight of a straw upon the luxury of his table, or the yearly amount of that accumulating wealth upon which he sets his confidence. Were I, my brethren, who have come from a distance, to adopt the language of a polite and insinuating flattery, and send you all away so safe and so satisfied with the charities you have performed—I might be doing as much mischief, as if I travelled the country, and revived the old priestly trade of the sale of indulgences. None more ready than a Christian to enter into a scheme of benevolence; but let it never be forgotten, that a scheme of benevolence may be entered into by many, who fall miserably short of the altogether Christian. Oh what a multitude of men and of women may be found, who can give their pennies a-week with the hand, while their heart is still with the treasures of a perishable world. Our Saviour was rich and for our sake He became poor. Here was the extent of His sacrifice. Now we may give in a thousand directions for the sake of others; and yet be sensibly as rich as ever. I am not calling upon you to make any great or romantic sacrifice. I do not ask you, in deed and in performance, to forsake all; but I say that you are short of what you ought to be, if you are not in readiness to forsake all upon a clear warning. I say that you may give your name to every subscription-list, and bestow your something upon every petitioner; and yet stand at an infinite distance from the example you are called upon to imitate.

The great point of inquiry should be, "Is the heart right with God?" Now I want to save you from a common delusion, when I tell you, that, out of your crumbs and fragments, many a Lazarus may be fed—while yet, like Dives, your heart may be wholly set upon the meat that perisheth. It is well, and very well, that you are a member of a benevolent society; and I shall rejoice to think of it as one of the smaller fruits of that mighty principle which brings the whole heart under its dominion—which makes you willing to renounce self and all its earthly interests at the call of duty—which sinks the pursuits and enjoyments of time in the prospects of eternity—Such a principle as would not merely dictate the surrender of a penny for the poverty of a neighbour, but would dictate the surrender of every earthly distinction and enjoyment on the clear call of conscience or Revelation—Such a principle as has often been put to the trial in those woful seasons, when a sweeping tide of bankruptcy sets in upon a country; and the sanguine speculations of one man, on the false statements of another, have involved many an innocent sufferer, in the loss of all that belongs to him. Could I obtain a view of his heart now, I might collect a more satisfying evidence of the way in which it stands affected by the things of another world, than I possibly could do, from all the odd fractions of his wealth, which he made over to his poorer brethren in the day of prosperity. When stript bare of his earthly possessions, is the hope of eternity enough for him? Is his heart filled with the agonies of resentment and despair; or with peaceful resignation to the will of God, and charity to the human instrument of his sufferings? Now is the time for the fair trial of his principles; and now may we learn if to him belongs the blessedness of enduring it. And it will go further to prove his claim to the kingdom of heaven, than all the charities of his brighter days—if trust in Providence, and prayer for the forgiveness of those who have injured him, shall be found to occupy and to sustain his heart under the fallen fortunes of his family.

There may be no call upon you to surrender all, in which case you are spared the very act of a surrender. But God who is the discerner of the heart, sees whether yours is in such a state of principle, as to be in readiness for the surrender, so soon as a clear requirement of conscience is upon you. Were persecution again to light up its fires in this land of quietness—it is to be hoped, that there are many who would cheerfully take the spoiling of their goods, rather than abandon the cause of the gospel. They have not the opportunity of manifesting themselves to the world; but the discerning eye of God stands in no need of such a manifestation. He can fathom all the secrecies of the inner man; and, in the great day of the revelation of hidden things, it will be seen who they are that would have forsaken all to follow after Christ.

Such as these, may have no opportunity of showing the whole extent of their devotion to Christ, by any actual performance. But though we cannot speak to their performance, we can speak to their principle. They sit loose to the interests of this world, and their heart is fully directed to the treasure which is in heaven. They have the willing mind; and, whenever their means and their opportunities allow, they will show that they have it. The thing given may be in itself so very small, as to be no evidence whatever of the preference of eternity over time. Think not then that by the giving of this thing, you will obtain heaven. Heaven, my brethren, is not so purchased. You are made meet for heaven by the Spirit working in your soul a conformity to the image of the Saviour; and if the charity which filled his heart, actuate and inflame yours, it will carry you forward with a mighty impulse to every likely or practicable scheme for the interests of humanity, and for the alleviation of all its sufferings.

Before I pass on to the second head of discourse, I shall give my answer to a question, which may have been prompted by some of the observations I have already come forward with.

Does not the very object of this society, it may be asked, furnish the opportunity we are in quest of? May it not put the whole extent of a Christain's principles to the test? Has he it not in his power to forsake all in following the injunction of Christ, "Be willing to distribute, and

ready to communicate?" What is to hinder him from selling all his goods to feed the poor? And if his penny a-week be no decisive evidence of the Christian principle which actuates him, may not the evidence be made still more decisive, by throwing his all into the treasury of our beneficence?

When a Christian has a clear and urgent call of conscience upon him, it is his duty to obey that call in the face of every sacrifice, however painful, and however mortifying. But it is also his duty to inform and to enlighten his conscience; and if, with this view, he were to cast about for advice, and do me the honour of making me one of his advisers, I would submit to him the following short representation.

There are many ways in which a man may show, that he has less value for this world's wealth, than his neighbours around him. Why? He may do so by putting forth his hand to destroy it. He may set it on fire. He may strip himself of all that belongs to him by throwing it away: but none will give to such fanatical extravagancies as these, the credit which is only due to the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind.

It is not enough, then, that you prove your indifference to this world's wealth by parting with it; you must have an object in parting with it, and the question is, what should that object be? Now the feeding of the poor is only one of the many objects, for which you are entrusted with the gifts of Providence. You are called upon to love your neighbour as yourself; but you are not called upon to love him better than yourself. Your own subsistence is an object, therefore, which it is not your duty to surrender. This is one limit; and there are many others. If you provide not for your own family, you are worse than an infidel. Your parents have a claim upon you. You may be rich; and though I do not speak of it as a positive duty, to maintain the rank and distinction which belong to you, yet you are allowed by Christianity to do so. The New Testament recognises the gradations of society; and it numbers the rich and the noble among the disciples of the Saviour. Add to all this, that if the whole disposable wealth of the country was turned to the one direction of feeding the poor—what would become of the others, ay, and of the worthier objects of Christian benevolence? Have not the poor souls as well as bodies? Must they not be taught as well as fed? Are the narrow limits of our own parish, or even our own island, to be impassable barriers to our charity? Did not the same Saviour who said, Give to him that asketh, say also, Go and preach my gospel to every creature under heaven; and that the labourer is worthy of his hire? Those who cannot preach may at least hire; and if the whole stream of our disposable wealth were turned to the one object of relieving the temporal necessities of others—what would become of those sublime enterprises, by which, under the promise of heaven, we send the light of Christianity, and all its blessings, over the wide and dreary extent of that moral wilderness, that is every where around us—by which we carry the message of peace into the haunts of savages, and speed the arrival of those millennial days, when the sacred principles of goodwill to men shall circulate through the world; and when the sun, from its rising to its going down, shall witness the people of all the countries it shines upon, to be members of one great and universal family?

But more than this—if every shilling of the disposable wealth of the country, were given to feed the poor, it would create more poverty than it provides for. It would land us, in all the mischief of a depraved and beggarly population. That subsistence, which they could obtain from the prodigal and injudicious charity of others, they would never think of earning for themselves. Idleness and profligacy would lay hold of the great mass of our peasantry. Every honourable desire after independence, would be extinguished; and the people of the land, thrown loose from every call to the exertions of regular industry, would spread disorder over the whole face of the country. It does not occur to the soft daughters of sensibility, but it is not on that account the less true; that if every purse were emptied in the cause of poverty—there would be more want and hunger and hardship in our neighborhood, than there is at this moment. With the extention of your fund, you would just multiply the crowd of

competitors—each pressing forward for his share, and jostling out his more modest and unobtrusive neighbour, who would be left to pine in secret over his untold and unnoticed indigence. The clamorous and undeserving poor, would in time spread themselves over the whole of that ground, which should only be occupied by the children of helplessness: and, after the expenditure of millions, it would be found that there was more unrelieved want, and more unsoftened wretchedness in the country, than ever.

II. I now come to a far more effectual check upon the mischiefs I have alluded to, than even the judgment and cautious inquiry of the giver. I proceed, in the second place, to the duties of those who are placed in such a situation of life, as to become receivers; and the first thing I have to propose to them is, that, if it be more blessed to give than to receive, then it is merely putting this assertion of my text into another form, when I say that it is less blessed to receive than to give. There may be something in this to startle and alarm the feelings of the poor. What! they may say, is our poverty a crime in the eye of Heaven? Are we to be punished for our circumstances? Are we to be degraded into an inferior degree of blessedness, because our situation imposes upon us the painful necessity of receiving from another, what, with all our industry we cannot earn for ourselves? We always understood the gospel to be a message of glad tidings to the poor; that its richest consolations were addressed to them; that through it God hath chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of the promised kingdom. And shall we now be told, that the man who gives, because his situation enables him to do so, is more blessed than he who is forced by his situation to be a receiver?

In answer to this I have to observe, that man is neither punished nor rewarded for his circumstances—that the kingdom is only withheld from the rich, when they set their confidence and their affections on the world, and despise the offered salvation; and the poor obtain an interest in the gospel, not because they are poor, but it is because they are rich in faith, that they are heirs of that kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him.

How often shall we have to repeat it, that it is not the deed of the hand that God looks to, but the dictates of the heart which gave rise to it? On this simple principle I undertake to prove, that the very poorest among you, though you have not a penny to bestow on the necessities of others, may obtain, not the lower blessedness of him who accepts of charity, but the higher blessedness of him who dispenses it; and that even though so humble in situation as to be a daily dependant on another's bounty, you may stand higher in the book of God's remembrance, that even he whose liberality sustains you, and by the crumbs and fragments of whose table you are kept from starvation.

Let me first take the case of those poor, who are really not able to give; but who, by the struggles of a painful and honourable industry, have just kept themselves above the necessity of receiving. Had they been a little more idle, and a little more thriftless—a thing which very often they might easily have been without censure and without observation, they behooved to come upon your charity. They could have made good a legal claim to a part at least of their maintenance. They could have drawn a certain sum out of your poors' fund. But no, they would not. Before they will take this sum they try what they can do by more work and better management. They will not take a fraction from you, so long as they can shift for themselves. They do as Paul the Apostle did before them; they labour with their own hands rather than be burdensome to others; and that sum which they might have gotten, they suffer you to keep entire for the relief of other wants still more urgent, and of other families still more helpless.

Now, the question I have to put to you is—"Who is the giver of this sum?" I may take a list of them. I may put down the names of the original contributors, who make it up by their pennies and their sixpences. But there is one name which does not appear in the catalogue, yet nobler than them all—even the hard-working and the honest-hearted labourer, who might have obtained the whole sum, but refused to touch a single fraction of it—who shifted it from himself and let it pass unimpaired to the lightening of a burden

still heavier than his own—who declined the offer; or to whom the offer was never made, because it was known to all, that his own hands ministered unto his own necessities. He is the giver of this sum. Others may have parted with it out of their abundance. But he has given it out of the sweat of his brow. He has risen up early and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself. It was first gotten from the easy liberalities of those who scarcely felt it to be a sacrifice. But it was gotten a second time out of the bones and muscles of a generous workman. I trust there are hundreds of such in this town and neighbourhood. I offer them the homage of my respectful congratulations; nor am I doing them a greater honour, than the sincerity of my admiration goes along with, when I say that they are the best friends of the poor, they are their kindest and most generous benefactors.

But let me go still further down—even to the case of those who are really not able to give; but who, burdened with the infirmities of age or of disease or of sickly and deformed children, have at length given way to the pressure of circumstances, and come under the painful necessity of receiving. They may still carry the same noble principle along with them; and though in outward deed, they are receivers—to them may belong all the generosity of the giver, and all his blessedness. You may not be able so to labour, as not to be burdensome; but all of you are able to do your best—and if you so work and so manage, that you are as little burdensome as you can, your names may be recorded in the book of Heaven among the most benevolent of the species. I love the poor, and I have this very thing to record of them; and I have no doubt that there are some now present, who have witnessed it along with me. Have you never offered any of them a sum, out of the public charity; and received part of it back again? Our necessities force us to take something; but we shall not take to the whole extent of your offer. We request that you will keep a part, and leave us to make a fend with the remainder. Who, I ask again, has given me the sum that is so returned to me? Who is it that has fed the poor and clothed the naked out of it? To whose account am I to put down this sum, more honourable to him who has given it—than the golden donation to be seen on the forehead of many a subscription paper? O, it is easy for us who sit at our warm fire-sides, and our plentiful tables, to throw a gift into the treasury, and live as softly and luxuriously as ever; but when a man of poverty submits to voluntary hardships, and fears to be burdensome—he may have a receiving hand but he has a giving heart; and the eye of the great Discerner may there see the sacred principle of charity, in its purest and most heavenly exercise.

Now, it is not necessary to make the supposition of so much money being offered, and a part of it being given back again by each individual in these circumstances. Enough that the individual, by his labour and his frugality and his honest wish to serve others, makes a less sum necessary to be offered than would otherwise have been sufficient for him. I trust that there are many such individuals; and be assured that though they get out of the parish fund, though they get out of the produce of your society, though they get out of the liberality of their wealthier acquaintances, though to the outward and undiscerning eye of the world they are one and all of them receivers—in the sight of that high and heavenly Witness who pondereth the heart of man, they are givers—they are put down as givers in the book of His remembrance—and, if what they do and suffer in this way be done unto Jesus and suffered for His sake—to them will be assigned all the blessedness of givers in the day of reckoning.

The duty which I am now pressing upon the poor of being as little burdensome as they can, is the very lesson to be drawn from the passage now before us. On what occasion is it that Paul says in my text—"It is more blessed to give than to receive?" It is true that he gave the people of Ephesus christian instruction, he ministered to them in spiritual things; but he is speaking of the way in which he obtained a temporal subsistence for himself and for his companions. In reference to meat and to clothing he did not give to the Ephesians; but he wrought for it to himself and his own company and it was doing this which brought down upon him the blessedness of giving. Think

not then, my brethren, that your poverty shuts you out from the same reward. Though you do not give with the hand, you may earn the blessedness of giving that Paul earned; and you may do it in the very same way that he did. You may covet no man's silver or gold or apparel; and, in as far as age or disease or the pressure of a numerous and sickly offspring will let you, you may say with the apostle "Yea you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that are with me."

In this age of benevolent exertion, it is delightful to see the number of societies, and the ready encouragement which comes in upon them from the liberality of the public—an encouragement which I trust will never be withdrawn, till Bibles are circulated through all countries, and till missionaries have planted in every land the faith of a crucified Saviour. But while witnessing the splendid names, and the princely donations which appear in the printed lists of these societies, I cannot forbear the reflection that there are many others whose labour of love is unnoticed and unrecorded, who will be registered in the book of heaven as fellow-helpers to the cause. There are poor who cannot afford to give; but who, struggling manfully with the necessity of their circumstances, keep themselves from being burdensome to others—and God, who judgeth righteously, will put down in part to their account, the sum which they have suffered to go untouched and unencroached upon to the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. There are others who cannot afford to give; but who strive to the uttermost—and, by dint of sobriety and of frugal management, reduce the supply of charity to a sum as small as possible. God will not treat them as receivers. He will put down to their account all that they have saved to the givers; and He will say, that, by the whole amount of what is thus saved, they have fed the stream of that benevolence which is directed to other objects. The contributors, whose names are presented every year to the eye of the public, are not the only contributors to our Bible and Missionary Societies. I could tell you of more; and though I cannot point my finger to those of them who occupy this town and neighbourhood, I am sure that many of my hearers can do it for me. There is the industrious labourer, who nobly clears his way among all the difficulties which surround him. There is the frugal house-wife, who lends her important share to the interests of the young family. There is the servant, who ministers out of her own wages—to those parents whom age has bowed down in helpless dependence upon the gratitude of their offspring. In the eye of the world, they may not have given a penny to the cause; but, substantially and in effect, they have supported it. They have circulated Bibles; they have sent forth missionaries; through them the stream of Christian light has been poured more copiously on the wilds of Paganism; and many a converted Indian who meets them in heaven, will bear them witness, that they have added to the number of the redeemed by giving the message of peace a speedier circulation.

I now conclude, and I do it with one observation. Ask the giver if he would not feel more disposed to be liberal, and to open a wider hand to the distresses of those around him, were he assured that all he gave went to the alleviation of real distress. It is the experience of imposition which shuts many a heart—and this is a lesson both to the receivers and the visitors of this society. How much is it in the power of the lower classes, to befriend their poorer brethren, by the rigid observance of the duty I have now been pressing upon them. They would bring down upon them an aid and a sympathy from the rich, which they have never yet experienced. The counterfeit and the worthless poor, do a world of mischief to the cause of beneficence. They obtain for themselves that, which the unfortunate and deserving poor should have gotten. And, what is still more than this, they stifle in the hearts of the rich, those emotions of sympathy which would otherwise have kindled in them. They throw the cold damp of suspicion over their charities. The money, which would have circulated as freely as the light of day among the habitations of the wretched, is detained, as by an iron grasp, in the hands of men who have at one time been misled by the dissimulations of the poor, and at another provoked by their

ingratitude. Ye amiable and humane visitors of this society, it lies upon you to remedy this evil. Convince the givers around you, of the judicious application of the money in your hands; and more will flow in upon you. Be vigilant, be discerning, be impartial. Your judgment must be brought into action, as well as your sympathy. There is as much of the coolness of principle as of the high ecstacy of feeling in the benevolence of a Christian; and my prayer is, that the kind office you are engaged in may be blessed to your own souls—that a single aim to the glory of God may animate all your exertions—that the glittering parade of ostentation may not deceive you—that, instead of seeking the honour which cometh from one another, you may seek the honour that cometh from God only—that the tenderness you feel for others, may be the genuine fruit of that spirit which is given to them who believe—that the labour you have undertaken may indeed be undertaken in the Lord—and then, I can assure you, it will not be in vain; and I call upon you to be stedfast and immovable, and always abounding therein.

To conclude. It is our duty to relieve actual suffering in all its forms; and, be it ignorance, or disease, or age, or lunacy, or hunger, or nakedness, the claim upon our beneficence is made out in one and all of these cases, if it just be made out that they exist—and with the same tone of earnestness by which I call upon you to instruct the ignorant, and to harbour the deranged, and to minister to the diseased, do I call upon you to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, and to give of your abundance to him who is in need. There is no difference among all these cases in the obligation to grant relief; and the only difference I ever contended for, is in the way of going about it. Do the thing in such a way, as shall relieve the present case; and do not the thing in such a way, as shall have the effect of multiplying the future cases. Now you do not multiply the future cases of disease, or derangement, or dumbness, or blindness by giving the utmost publicity to your plans for relieving them, by pleading for them from the pulpit, by building hospitals and asylums, and blazoning the names and the payments of subscribers in the columns of a newspaper.

But you do multiply the future cases of indigence, by all this noise and all this parading, about a plan or a society which has for its object the general relief of indigence. And the plain cause of the difference between the former and the latter is, that a man almost never becomes a voluntary object for the charity of an hospital; but he may, and in point of fact he often does, become a voluntary object for the charity of alms: And therefore it is, that the less he knows about the existence of the last kind of charity the better; and a want of attention to this principle is, I am sorry to say, ripening or preparing the population of our great towns, for that system which now obtains with such full and mischievous operation in England—and that delicacy, to keep alive which Paul gave up a portion of his apostolical labours, a minister now-a-days is called upon also to leave his parish duties, but for the very different purpose of breaking it down: And thus it is, that, under the soft guise of humanity, a system may be instituted, which, with kindness for its principle, may carry cruelty in its operation—ay, and when the yearly assessment comes to be established, and the provision of a mistaken benevolence is made known, and the poor have found their way to it—they will set in upon you by thousands; and the money which is withheld from the endowment of more schools and more churches and more ministers to meet the moral and religious wants of an increasing population—will be as nothing to the hungry and unquenchable demands of a people, whom you have seduced from that principle of independence which Christianity teaches, and which the despised exertions of the Christian minister alone can keep alive.

And is the cause of indigence then to be altogether abandoned? This does not follow. The duty of relieving want is unquestionable, but there is a way of going about it; and while I honestly wish it were carried to a ten old greater extent than it is at this moment—all I contend for is, that it shall be invested with the good old scriptural attribute of secrecy. Let societies be multiplied and pled for and publicly made known for the improvement of the mind, and the re-

lief of every one species of involuntary suffering—but do let the relief of want be more confided than it is, to the discernment and discretion and active benevolence of individuals. It is my earnest desire that every man among you were a Cornelius, and every woman among you were a Dorcas—but I should like the alms of the one unseen by human eye to ascend as a memorial before God; and the making of coats and garments by the other to remain unknown, till the hand of death shall discover it. Were every individual among you, to give up one-tenth of his income to the comfort of those in your neighbourhood, I am sure I should be among the first to rejoice; but let each of you give one-hundredth of his income to some published and proclaimed charity for bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked; and a fearful suspicion of the consequences would chill my every feeling of benevolent approbation. It is true that concert carries an advantage along with it; but is not concert consistent with secrecy? Is it necessary that the trumpet be sounded upon the subject, either in the pulpit or out of it? Would not the gradual abolition of the public charities, for like the abolition of every established mischief I fear it must be gradual, give an impulse to individual benevolence to replace the want of them; and, after almsgiving had taken this salutary direction, are there not Christians to be found in every street, who, unknowing and unknown to all but themselves, could meet together in the name of Christ; and, under the eye of their heavenly Witness, could give their attention and their charity and their wisdom to that work and labour of love which he Has assigned to them?

I feel myself oppressed by the want of time and of space, for I am aware of many questions which I must leave unresolved behind me; but there is one which I cannot pass over. Does a published and proclaimed plan for the relief of orphans come under the animadversions which I have felt it my duty to advance, against any such plan for the relief of indigence in general? O no, my brethren. A public charity for the relief of general indigence, may tempt many a father to the relaxation of his industry, and many a mother to the relaxation of her management; but a charity for the relief of orphans will neither tempt the one nor the other to a voluntary martyrdom. Carry the former system to a certain extent and you will witness many a parent providing not for those of his own house but carry the latter system to the full extent of its object, and you never can have such a spectacle as this to freeze and to discourage you. In the one case, many of the children you feed and you educate, may be devolved upon you by the wilful negligence of a parent. In the other case they are devolved upon you by the will of God. He has called away the parents to another scene; and He has left to you the care of their helpless family. If you are officious enough to do that which is more the duty of another, you may have performed his work; but by tempting him to a dereliction of his principles, you have done it at the expense of his soul. This language is surely not too strong, if by your injudicious charity you have made a single parent let down the industriousness of his habits—for by so doing you have made him worse than an infidel. But such is the wisdom of the object to which you have attached yourselves, that though you do all which you propose—you interfere with no man's duty; you tempt and you corrupt no parents, for alas, where are they?—you stifle no one feeling of parental tenderness, for this is what the cold hand of death hath already done—you withdraw no children from father's or mother's care, for fathers and mothers are by the mysterious Providence of God withdrawn from them: And that duty which at one time belonged to another, has become singly and entirely yours. O how I rejoice, when the lessons of wisdom are at one with the best and the most delightful of our sympathies—when compassion may give full vent to its tenderness, and no one principle or maxim of prudence is trenched upon—when the sweet movements of pity may be cherished and indulged to the uttermost, and truth brings no one severity to scowl upon us, or tell us with stern authoritative voice that we expatiate on a forbidden territory. Keep by your professed object, my brethren; and if you do so, let your liberality know no other limit, than that the object be provided for.

And let me not dismiss you without at least an observation, which I pray God may bless by the enlightening influences of His Spirit, so as to undeceive many who build their confidence upon their charities. A man, under the impulse of natural feeling, may do many a deed of tenderness; and yet may have a mind totally unfurnished with a sense of God, and a life totally polluted by conformity to the world. It is well that God has provided society with so many natural securities for its existence, in the constitution of the members who compose it—just as it is well for the preservation of the other tribes of animals, that He has endowed them with the instinct of affection for their young. But ever remember that feeling is one thing and principle is another; and to give the stamp of religion to your doings, a sense of God and of His will, must mingle and give the tone and the direction to every one of them. And thus while it is true that part of pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, it is only when this is done with a reference of the heart to God and the Father. And yet how many, because endowed with the constitutional tenderness, think that upon this single peculiarity, they may walk in the sight of their own eyes here, and be translated with all the waywardness of a heart alienated from God and devoted with every one of its affections to the creature, to the joys and the rewards of an unfading hereafter: And therefore it is, that I call upon you not to put asunder what God has joined—not to found your confidence upon a single half-text of a record, which in the vast majority of its contents, you despise and put away from you—not to open your eye to one clause of a verse, and shut your eye to the other clause of it; but know that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

I have hitherto confined myself to general principles; but let me not forget the claims of that institution which I have been appointed to advocate before you. Nor have I forgotten them. In this age of benevolent institutions, when some of them are so legalized by the strong hand of authority, and some of them are so paraded before the eyes of the public, as to be counted upon by the receiver; as to tempt him from the virtue of the text; as to relax his economical habits, and of course to create and to multiply more cases of distress than it is in the power of human contrivances ever to provide for—I say, in these circumstances, one feels a comfort in attaching himself to the cause of an endowment, which may be supported to any extent you please, without its ever being possible to realize the mischief I am now alluding to. Why, my brethren—the very confinement of the object to a limited number of families, is of itself a security, against that mischief which our soundest economists apprehend from the number and the publicity of our benevolent institutions. Were the country, upon the spontaneous movement of its own kindly and religious feelings, to take upon itself the care of our destitute orphans, it just resolves itself into an augmentation of the clerical patrimony. It is only adding a little to the provision of the legislature in our behalf; and it is such an addition as will not give one single luxury to our table, or tempt us to the pride of life by enabling us to tack one vanity more to the splendour of our establishment. I am not aware of a single hurtful effect, that can be alleged against the charity for which I am contending. I know of nothing that should throw the cold damp of suspicion over it—and therefore it is that I feel no restraint whatever, in laying it before you as an open field, on which the benevolence of the public may expatiate, without fear and without encumbrance. It is true that the sympathies of a man are ever most alive to those distresses which may fall upon himself—and that it is for a minister to feel the deepest emotion, at the sad picture of the breaking up of a minister's family. When the sons and the daughters of clergymen are left to go, they know not whither, from the peacefulness of their father's dwelling—never were poor outcasts less prepared by the education and the habits of former years, for the scowl of an unpitying world; nor can I figure a drearier and more affecting contrast, than that which obtains between the blissful security of their earlier days, and

the dark and unshielded condition, to which the hand of Providence has now brought them. It is not necessary, for the purpose of awakening your sensibilities on this subject, to dwell upon every one circumstance of distress which enters into the sufferings of this bereaved family—or to tell you of the many friends they must abandon, and the many charms of that peaceful neighbourhood which they must quit for ever. But when they look abroad, and survey the innumerable beauties which the God of nature has scattered so profusely around them—when they see the sun throwing its unclouded splendours over the whole neighbourhood—when, on the fair side of the year, they behold the smiling aspect of the country; and at every footstep they take, some flower appears in its loveliness, or some bird offers its melody to delight them—when they see quietness on all the hills, and every field glowing in the pride and luxury of vegetation—when they see summer throwing its rich garment over this goodly scene of magnificence and glory, and think, in the bitterness of their souls, that this is the last summer which they shall ever witness, smiling on that scene which all the ties of habit and of affection have endeared to them—when this thought, melancholy as it is, is lost and overborne in the far darker melancholy of a father torn from their embrace, and a helpless family left to find their way unprotected and alone through the lowering futurity of this earthly pilgrimage—Do you wonder, that their feeling hearts should be ready to lose hold of the promise, that He who decks the lily fair in flowery pride, will guide them in safety through the world, and at last raise all who believe in Him to the bloom and the vigour of immortality? The flowers of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your Heavenly Father careth for them—and how much more careth He for you, O ye of little faith.

O, it is kind in you, my brethren, to set yourselves forward as the instruments of this promise—to house these unprotected wanderers—to shield them from the blast they are far too soft and tender to endure—and to lighten the severity of that fall which they have suffered, by the premature loss of a father, who now only lives in the memory of a revering people, and the affections of a despairing family. Do, my brethren, give out of your abundance. You know not what the hand of death may ere long bring upon your own habitations. Work then while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work. If the Discerner of the heart, who counts even a cup of cold water given to the least of His little ones, sees of your offering that it is done unto Him, and that it is for the love you bear His gospel, and the value you have for His ministers—if He can recognise it as the fruit of that mighty principle which purifies the heart, and sends forth the copious streams of all that is good and kind and generous into the walk and conversation, then verily I say unto you that you shall by no means lose your reward.

SERMON XXXVII.

*On Religious Establishments.**

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."—2 TIMOTHY ii. 2.

THE apostle, by this verse, makes provision for the continuance of a gospel ministry upon earth. If he do not enact the mode of succession for all ages, he at least exemplifies it from his own age, down to a third generation of Christian teachers in the church. He ordained Timothy to this office, who was also to

* A Sermon preached in St. George's church, Edinburgh, before the Society for the daughters of the clergy, in May, 1829.

ordain others—which last, we may well conjecture, were not only to minister, but in their turn to ordain ministers who might come after them. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is marvellously little of express enactment in Scripture for an ecclesiastical constitution; and that this fertile controversy chiefly turns upon apostolical example, and the lights of ecclesiastical history—thus leaving it more in the shape of an indeterminate or discretionary question, and to be decided by considerations of expediency—a term, which, in the Christian sense of the word, is of far loftier bearing than in the vulgar sense of it—as pointing, not to what makes most for the good of self or the good of society, but as pointing to what makes most for the prosperity of religion in the world, for the extension and the glory of our Redeemer's kingdom. Expediency, wherewith we commonly associate a certain character of sordidness, instantly acquires a sacredness of character, when its objects are thus made sacred; and its high aim is more thoroughly to Christianize a land, and to ensure a fuller and more frequent circulation of the gospel among its families.

Now there is one question of ecclesiastical polity, which, in the lack of aught in the New Testament that is very distinct or authoritative upon the subject, we should feel much inclined to decide upon this ground—we mean the question of a religious establishment. The truth is, that Christianity, for three centuries, was left to find its own way in the world—for during the whole of that period, none of this world's princes did it reverence. All this time, it was treated as an unprotected outcast, or rather as a branded criminal. Yet the execrable superstition, as it was then called, neither withered under neglect, nor was quelled by the hand of persecuting violence. It grew and gathered into strength, under the terrible processes that were devised for its annihilation. Disgrace could not overbear it. Threats could not terrify it. Imprisonment could not stifle it. Exile could not rid the world of it, or chase the nuisance away. The fires of bloody martyrdom could not extinguish it. They could not all prevail against a religion, which had the blessing of heaven upon its head, and in its bosom the silent energies of conviction. And so it spread and multiplied among men. And, signal triumph of principle over power, of the moral over the sentient and the grossly physical! was the indestructible church nurtured into might and magnitude, and settled more firmly on its basis, amid the various elements which had conspired for its overthrow. Throughout the whole transition—from the time that the fishermen of Galilee tended its infancy, to the time that the Emperors of Rome did homage to its wondrous manhood—it had neither the honours nor the revenues of an establishment. This change did not, and could not, originate with the ecclesiastical. It originated with the civil authority. It took effect by the state holding out to the church the right hand of fellowship. The advance was made by the former; and we should hold it tantamount to the vindication of a religious establishment, could we demonstrate, how, without the compromise of principle, but rather in obedience to its purest and highest behests, the advance might be met and consented to by the latter.

Let me suppose then a society of Christians, great or small, actuated, as Moravians now are, by the spirit and zeal of devoted missionaries—pressed in conscience by the obligation of our Saviour's last saying, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature"—bent on an expedition to the heathen of distant lands, if they had but an opening for the voyage and the means of defraying it. Hitherto, it will be admitted, that all is purely apostolical; and that, as yet, no violence has been done to the high and heaven-born sanctities of the gospel. Now what we ask is, whether there be aught to vitiate this holy character, in the next indispensable step of the means being provided; of money being raised, for the essential hire and maintenance of the labourers; of the vessel being equipped, that is to bear them onward in this errand of piety; of the wealth being transferred to their hands from the hands of willing contributors, for the support of the missionary household, for the erection of the missionary church and missionary dwelling-places. Is there aught of earthly contamination in this? Is the *Unitas Fratrum*, that church of spiritual men, at all brought

down from its saintliness, by those annual supplies, without which their perils among the heathen could not have been encountered—their deeds of Christian heroism could not have been performed? They maintain their own independence as a church notwithstanding. Their doctrines and discipline and mode of worship, are left untouched by the proceeding. In all matters ecclesiastical, they take their own way. It is true they are subsisted by others; but in no one article, relating to the church's peculiar business, are they controlled by them. They are maintained from without; but they need not, because of this, suffer one taint of desecration within. There is a connexion, no doubt, established between two parties; but I can see nothing in it, save a pecuniary succour rendered upon one side, and a high service of philanthropy rendered upon the other—yet rendered according to the strict methods, and in rigid conformity with the most sacred principles of those who are embarked on this high and holy vocation. The transaction, as we now relate it, is of purest origin; and has been nobly accredited by the blessed consequences which have followed in its train—for by means of these *hireling* labourers, the out-posts of Christianity have been pushed forward to the very outskirts of the human population; Christian villages have been reared in the farthest wilds of Paganism; the prowling savages of Greenland and Labrador have been reclaimed to the habits and the decencies of civilized life; and, greater far than any bliss or beauty which can be made to irradiate this fleeting pilgrimage, successive thousands of before untaught idolaters (under the effective tuition that has been brought to bear upon them) have lived in the obedience, and died in the triumphs, of the faith.

Now the essential character of this whole transaction is the same—whether we conceive these gospel-labourers to be employed in the business of a home, or in the business of a foreign mission. By the one process, you carry the lessons of our religion beyond; by the other you circulate them within the territory of Christendom. The effect of the one is to spread Christianity externally abroad, and so perhaps as to sprinkle many nations. The effect of the other is to fill up the internal vacancies, and so perhaps as thoroughly to saturate with Christianity one nation. It is not enough reflected on, that, under the latter process, a vastly greater number of human spirits may be medicated into spiritual and immortal health, than under the former; and, at all events, that this latter also must have its accomplishment—ere the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth even as the waters, which, in their collapse admit of no internal vacancy, cover the sea. But the position which I chiefly want to fix at present is, that, whether the missionary movement be in an outward or in a homeward direction, its whole economy and character may remain essentially the same. The enterprise may be supported in its expenses by one party. It may be executed in its work and labour by another party. Each may be distinct of the other, and give no disturbance to the other. The secular men may provide the means; yet the ecclesiastical men, in their proper department, may have the entire and uncontrolled management. They may take their support from others in things temporal; yet suffer no invasion by them, on their inviolable prerogative of determining and ordering in things spiritual. Their maintenance cometh from others; but their worship, and their creed, and their formularies, and their sacraments, and their ministrations, both of word and of ordinances, are all their own. We yet see no compromise of principle in such a connexion as this. There is support given upon the one side. But there is no surrender, in the least article either of faith or holiness, made upon the other side. The only submission that we can perceive on the part of these missionaries or ministers to other men, is a submission to be fed by them; and that, that they might wait without distraction on the business of their own unshackled and uncontrolled ministry. In this instance then, as in the former, there is the like pure origin, and there may be a like or perhaps a surpassingly-glorious result. If by the foreign mission, stations are planted along the margin of our peopled earth—by the home mission stations may be multiplied over the territory of our own land. If, as the effect of the one, we now behold villages of peace and piety in the distan

wilderness—as the effect of the other, the moral wilderness around us may be lighted up and fertilized; and we may be made to witness both a holier Sabbath and purer week-days than heretofore, in all our parishes. If, in virtue of the missionary doings abroad, we read that hundreds of families in some before untrodden field of heathenism have been Christianized—let us not forget, that many are the cities of our own island, where, without one mile of locomotion, we might have converse with thousands of families, which, but for the same doings at home, would be sunk in the apathy and the grossness of practical heathenism. If, as the fruit of the one service, we can appeal to humanized savages, and rudest wanderers of the desert, transformed into Christian and companionable men—let not the splendour of this achievement eclipse the equal importance of the other service, if we can appeal to an effectiveness as mighty and momentous, in our own cottage patriarchs, our own virtuous and well-taught peasantry.

Now, we think it is not by a fanciful, but by a sound generalization, that we pass from the case of a home mission, to that of an establishment—which is neither more nor less, in fact, than a universal home mission. At its first institution, in the days of Constantine, the very work remained to be done, which we have now specified. Its proper object, is not to extend Christianity into ulterior spaces, but thoroughly to fill up the space that had been already occupied. It is a far mightier achievement than may appear at first view, completely to overtake the whole length and breadth of a land. All the itineracies and the traverse movements of the many thousand missionaries, who, during the three first centuries, lived and died in the cause, fell short of this accomplishment. They did much in the work of spreading the gospel externally; but they left much undone in the work of spreading it internally. They had Christianized the thousands who lived in cities; but the millions of pagans, or of peasantry, who were yet unconverted, evince the country to have been every where a great moral fastness, which, till opened up by an establishment, would remain impregnable. Now this very opening was presented to the ministers of Christ, when the Roman Emperor, whether by a movement of faith, or a movement of philanthropy and patriotism, made territorial distribution of these over his kingdoms and provinces; and assigning a territorial revenue for the labourers of this extensive vineyard, enabled each to set himself down in his own little vicinity—the families of which he could assemble to the exercises of Christian piety on the Sabbath, and among whom he could expatiate through the week in all the offices and attentions of Christian kindness. Such an offer, whether Christianly or but politically made upon the one side, could most Christianly be accepted and rejoiced in by the other. It extended inconceivably the powers and the opportunities of usefulness. It brought the gospel of Jesus Christ into contact with myriads more of imperishable spirits; and with as holy a fervour as ever gladdened the heart of the devoted missionary, when the means of an ampler service to the Redeemer's cause were put into his hands, might the church in these days have raised to heaven its orisons of purest gratitude, that kings at length had become its nursing fathers, and opened up to it the plenteous harvest of all their population. There is just as little of the essentially corrupt in this connexion between the church and the state, as there is in the connexion between a missionary board and its pecuniary supporters. Each is a case of the Earth helping the Woman; but, whatever of earthliness may be upon the one side, there might be none, and there needs be none, upon the other. The one may assist in things temporal—while the other may continue to assert its untouched and entire jurisdiction, as heretofore, in things spiritual. There might thus be an alliance between the Altar and the Throne—yet without the feculence of any earthly intermixture being at all engendered by it. The state avails itself of the church's services; and the church gives back again no other than the purest services of the sanctuary. Its single aim, as heretofore, is the preparation of citizens for heaven; but, in virtue of the blessings which Christianity scatters on its way, do the princes of this world find that these are the best citizens of earth—and that the cheap defence of nations, the best safeguard of their prosperity and their power, is a universal

Christian education. There needs be nought, we repeat, of contamination in this. The state pays the church; yet the church, in the entire possession of all those privileges and powers which are strictly ecclesiastical, maintains the integrity of her faith and worship notwithstanding. She might be the same hallowed church, as when the fires of martyrdom were blazing around her—the same spirituality among her ministers—the same lofty independence in all her pulpits. The effect of an establishment is not necessarily to corrupt Christianity, but to extend it—not necessarily to vitiate the ministrations of the gospel, but certainly to disseminate those ministrations more intimately amongst, as well as to bear them more diffusively abroad over the families of the land.

But just as in philosophy and politics, there are mistakes upon this subject of a religious establishment, from the very common error of not assigning the right effect to its right cause. There is a kind of vague and general imagination, as if corruption were the invariable accompaniment of such an alliance between the civil and the ecclesiastical; and this has been greatly fostered, by the tremendously corrupt Popery, which followed in historical succession after the establishment of Christianity in the days of Constantine, and which certainly holds out, in vivid contrast, the difference between this religion in the period of its suffering, and this religion in the period of its security and triumph. But it were well to discriminate the precise origin of this frightful degeneracy. It arose not from without; it arose from within. It was not because of any ascendency by the state over the church whom it now paid, and thereby trenched upon its independence in things spiritual. It was because of an ascendency by the church over the state, the effect of that superstitious terror which it wielded over the imaginations of men, and which it most unworthily prostituted to the usurpation of power in things temporal.

The fear that many have of an establishment, is, lest through it, the state should obtain too great power over the church, and so be able to graft its own secularity, or its own spirit of worldliness, on the pure system of the gospel,—whereas the actual mischief of Popery, lay in the church having obtained too great power over the state; and in the false doctrines which it devised, to strengthen and perpetuate a temporal dominion which should never have been permitted to it. There is no analogy between the apprehended evils of Christianity from an establishment now-a-days, and the actual evils inflicted on Christianity by the corrupt and audacious hierarchy of Rome. The thing dreaded from that connexion between the church and state which an establishment implies, is lest the state, stepping beyond its own legitimate province, should make invasion upon the church; and so, by a heterogeneous ingredient from without, in some way adulterate the faith. The thing experienced, on the contrary, was that the church, stepping beyond its legitimate province, made an invasion upon the state; and all the adulteration practised, either on the worship or the lessons of Christianity, was gendered from within. So far from the state having too much power, so that it could make unlawful invasion on the church—it had too little power, so that it could not resist the unlawful invasion made by the church upon itself. The theoretical fear is, lest the state should meddle with the prerogatives of the church; the historical fact is, that the church meddled with the prerogative of the state. So far from the apprehended corruption having experience to rest upon, it is precisely the reverse—of the actual corruption. But the truth is, that, after many conflicts, the matter is now better understood; and the understanding is, that neither should meddle with the prerogatives of the other. The state may pay the church; yet without conceding to it one particle of temporal sovereignty. The church may serve the state; yet without the surrender of one spiritual prerogative. To teach the people Christianity—that is the church's service. To teach them no other than what itself judges to be the Christianity of the Bible—that is the church's prerogative. To deal out among our parish families the lessons of faith and of holiness—this is the church's incumbent duty. But that these shall be no other than what itself judges to be the very lessons of that Scripture whose guidance in things spiritual it exclusively follows, and that in this

judgment no power on earth shall control it,—this is the church's inviolable privilege. The state might maintain a scholastic establishment; but, without charging itself with the methods of ordinary education, leave these to the teachers. Or the state might maintain an ecclesiastical establishment; but, without charging itself with the methods of Christian education, leave these to the church. In both cases it would multiply and extend over the land the amount of instruction. Yet the kind of instruction it might leave to other authorities, to other boards of management than its own; and this were the way to secure the best scholarship, and the best Christianity. For the sake of an abundant gospel dispensation, we are upheld in things temporal by the state. For the sake of a pure gospel dispensation, we are left in things spiritual to ourselves; and on ourselves; and on ourselves alone does it depend, whether the church now might not be the same saintly and unsullied church, that it was in the days of martyrdom—as spiritual in its creed, as purely apostolic in its spirit, as holy in all its services.

We will not allege the infallibility of our own church; for this were Popery though in the dress of Protestantism. We will not contend for the wisdom and the rectitude of all its doings; for we hold that there is neither individual nor corporate perfection upon the earth. But let the distinction be made between the acts of an establishment and the powers of an establishment; and we know not, if, through the whole of Christendom, there be one more happily devised in any other country for the religious good of its population. The fitness of a machine is one thing; the working of it is another. We feel as if it were no more than a warrantable confidence, when we stand up for the former—though we should feel it a most tremendous presumption, did we, in every instance and upon all occasions, stand up for the latter. In regard to the fitness of the mechanism, it may be the best possible. In regard to the actual working of the mechanism, one would need to side with all the majorities which have occurred for two centuries, and under all the changes of ecclesiastical policy, ere he could conscientiously affirm, that it has at all times been the best possible. Still, amid all the imputations and the errors which its greatest enemies may have laid to its door, we hold, that, upon the alternative of its existence or non-existence, there would hang a most fearful odds to the Christianity of Scotland. Let us admit it as true, that the apparatus might be made greatly more effective,—still it is true that a deadly effect would follow, and be felt to her remotest parishes, were the apparatus taken down. It were tantamount to a moral blight over the length and breadth of our land; and though we have not time to demonstrate, what now we have only time to affirm—yet, with all the certainty of experimental demonstration we say it, that the ministrations of our church then done away would never be replaced, to within a tenth of their efficacy, by all the zeal and energy and talent of private adventurers. There would arise no compensation for the present regular supply. There would arise no compensation for its fulness. Instead of the frequent Parish Church (that most beauteous of al spectacles to a truly Scottish heart, because to him the richest in moral association; and to whom therefore its belfrey, peeping forth from among the thick verdure of the trees which embosom it, is the sweetest and the fairest object in the landscape)—instead of this, we should behold the bare and thinly-scattered meeting-houses. For the large intervening spaces, we should have nothing but precarious and transcient itinerancies to trust to. The well established habit of Sabbath attendance, now as constant with many of our families as the weekly recurrence of the parish bell, would necessarily disappear. In a moral sense, they would become the waste and the howling wildernesses of Scotland. We feel quite assured, that, under this withering deprivation, a hard and outlandish aspect would gather on the face of our people. The cities might be somewhat served as heretofore, but the innumerable hamlets would be forsaken; and, just as it was anterior to an establishment at all, our peasants would again become Pagans, or, under the name and the naked ritual of Christianity, would sink into the blindness and the brutality and the sad alienation of Paganism.

But, without enlarging on this consideration, in which however there lies much of the strength of our cause, let us briefly recur to the leading argument of the day. It is not true that corruption must adhere, in virtue of its very nature and as by necessity, to an establishment. There will be corruption in fact; but rightly to estimate the quarter it comes from, distinction should be made between the nature of the institution and the nature of man. In virtue of the former, there may be no contamination; while in virtue of the latter, there may be a great deal. An establishment may in this case be the occasional, but not the efficient cause of mischief. The machine may be faultless; but exposed, as it must be, while the species lasts, to the intromission of hands, which to a certain degree will taint and vitiate all that they come in contact with. The remedy is not to demolish the machine, and transfer the hands which wrought it to other managements and other modes of operation—There will still be corruption notwithstanding. It will prove a vain attempt at escape, if you think to make it good by transferring human nature from the economy of an establishment to the economy of any of our sectaries. The human nature which you thus transfer, will carry its own virus along with it; and, while that nature remains there will be corruption in both, and which is strictly chargeable neither on the one economy nor on the other. It follows not therefore, because of this one or that other abuse, that the framework of our establishment should be destroyed. To make head against an abuse, we should direct our efforts to the place where the abuse originated—not to the machinery therefore in the present instance but to the men who work the machinery. It is not to a constitutional or political change in any of our establishments, that we should look for the coming regeneration of our land. It is to a moral and spiritual change in those who administer them. It is there, and not in the framework, where the change and the correction ought to be made. This is the way by which to get rid of corruption, and not by putting forth upon our national institutions the innovating hand of a destroyer. There is corruption in the civil government of our empire—yet that is no reason why it should be brought to dissolution. There is corruption in the municipal government of our towns—yet what fearful anarchy would ensue, should that be made the pretext for another overthrow; and every populous community in our land were left without a presiding magistracy to check and to control them. There is corruption, we will say it, in every family government throughout the nation—yet who can tell the numerous ills that would fester in every household, and flow over in innumerable streams upon society, were the rights and the restraints of parental authority therefore put an end to? And there may be corruption in the ecclesiastical government of our own church. This may be true, and yet it be just as true, that if, either by the policy of infatuated rulers or by the frenzy of an infatuated people, this church were swept away—it would inflict a most deleterious blow on the character of Scotland and the Christianity of Scotland's families. It is not by the violence of public hostility against our church that the nation is to be reformed—it is rather by the control of the public opinion upon her ministers; and most of all, by the answer from Heaven to the people's prayers, that her priests may be clothed with salvation. Were the establishment, and that, too, under the pretext of its corruption, destroyed—this would do nothing, and worse than nothing. Were the establishment, either in the whole, or in certain parts of its constitution reformed—this, of itself, would do little; and so little, as to stamp insignificance on many a contest of ecclesiastical policy. Were the establishment to have the Spirit of God poured forth upon its clergy—then, with the multiplication of its churches and parishes made more commensurate to the wants of our increasing population—this, and this alone, would do every thing. A conscientious minister, even with the establishment precisely as it is, has within its borders, the liberty and the privilege of unbounded usefulness. He has scope and outlet there, for the largest desires of Christian philanthropy. He has a parish within which he might multiply his assiduities at pleasure; and with no other control, but of the word of God over his doctrines, and his services and his

prayers. Should he quarrel with the reigning policy of our church, he has a place for the utterance of his testimony, against all he might esteem to be its defections and its errors. He can give his eloquence and his vote to the strength of its minorities. He can, by the contribution of his own name, and of his own proclaimed or recorded opinion, add to the moral force which always lies in an opposition of principle, and which numbers cannot overbear. All this he may do, and without forfeiting the respect, nay even the kindness, of his adversaries. But to go back from the courts of our establishment to its parishes, where after all he is on his best vantage-ground for the services of Christian patriotism, he can there expatiate without restraint in all the deeds and the devices of highest usefulness. It is on this precious home-walk of piety and peace, that he can acquit himself of his noblest ministrations for the interests of our immortal nature, and the good of human society. It is there where he sheds the purest influences around him, whether by the holiness of his pulpit or the kindness of his household ministrations. I cannot imagine a stronger yet happier ascendant, than that which belongs to a parish minister, who, throned in the cordialities of his people, finds unbounded welcome at every cottage door; and by his unwearied attention at sicknesses, and deaths, and funerals, has implicated the very sound of his name and idea of his person with the dearest interests of families. We positively know not, if any where else than under this mild patriarchal economy, a scene of so much moral loveliness can be found—or one where the hopes of heaven, and the best and kindest affections of earth, are so beautifully blended to uphold a system which covers all the land with so bland and benignant an economy as this, may well be termed the cheap defence of the nation. To uproot it, is the Gothic imagination of certain unfeeling calculators, whose sole principle, in the science of their politics, is a heartless arithmetic; but who, in the midst of their plodding computations, have overlooked what that is which constitutes the chief element of a nation's prosperity and a nation's greatness.

It is our part to vindicate the worth and importance of a church establishment to society; and this is best done by the worth and importance of our services. This will form our best security, infinitely better than any which statesmen can devise. There were certain recent alarms in which I could not participate, because I felt that any apprehended danger from without, might be greatly more than counteracted by a moral defence from within. This is the reaction by which we have hitherto stood our ground against infidelity on the one hand and sectarianism on the other; and with such an effect, that, with enough of energy and conscientiousness and enlightened zeal on the part of her ministers, all the menaces and agitation by which we are surrounded, will only rivet the Church of Scotland more firmly upon her basis, and rally more closely around her cause the wise and the good of our nation.

In regard to an establishment, it makes all the difference in the world to a conscientious man, whether it exposes the church to the evil of an overbearing constraint from without; or, in common with every other Christian society, to the evil of a spontaneous corruption from within its own bosom. If not to the former, he may carry entire into the establishment, all his powers and his liberty of usefulness. If only to the latter, he may personally have no share in the corruption; and politically, if such be the constitution of the church that he is vested with the privilege, he may resist, and if overcome, may lift his testimony against it. In all these respects, we know of nothing more perfect than the constitution of the Church of Scotland. There is, to each of its members, an independent voice from within; and from without there is no force or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical. They who feel dislike to an establishment, do so in general because of their recoil from all contract and communication with the state. We have no other communication with the state than that of being maintained by it—after which we are left to regulate the proceedings of our great home mission, with all the purity and the piety and the independence of any missionary board. We are exposed to nothing from without, which can violate the sanctity of the apostolical character, if ourselves do not violate it.

And neither are we exposed to aught, which can trench on the authority of the apostolical office, if ourselves we make no surrender of it. In things ecclesiastical we decide all. Some of these things may be done wrong; but still they are our majorities which do it. They are not, they cannot, be forced upon us from without. We own no head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever is done ecclesiastically is done by our ministers, acting in His name, and in profest submission to His authority. Implicated as the church and the state are imagined to be, they are not so implicated, as that, without the concurrence of the ecclesiastical courts, a full and final effect can be given to any proceeding, by which the good of Christianity and the religion of our people may be affected. There is not a clerical appointment, which can take place in any of our parishes, till we have sustained it. Even the law of patronage, right or wrong, is in force not by the power of the state, but by the permission of the church; and, with all its fancied omnipotence, has no other basis than that of our majorities to rest upon. It should never be forgotten, that, in things ecclesiastical, the highest power of our church is amenable to no higher power on earth for its decisions. It can exclude, it can deprive, it can depose at pleasure. External force might make an obnoxious individual the holder of a benefice; but there is no external force in these realms, that could make him a minister of the Church of Scotland. There is not one thing which the state can do to our independent and indestructible church, but strip her of its temporalities. "*Nec tamen consumebatur*," she would remain a church notwithstanding—stronger than ever, in the props of her own moral and inherent greatness; and, at least strong as ever, in the reverence of her country's population—she was as much a church in her days of suffering, as in her days of outward security and triumph—when a wandering outcost, with nought but the mountain breezes to play around her, and nought but the caves of the earth to shelter her, as now when admitted to the bowers of an establishment. The magistrate might withdraw his protection; and she cease to be an establishment any onger—but in all the high matters of sacred and spiritual jurisdiction, she would be the same as before. With or without an establishment, she, in these, is the unfettered mistress of her doings. The King by himself, or by his representative, might be a looker-on; but more, the King cannot, the King dare not.

But we gladly bring our argument to a close. It has been well remarked, that in the abstract discussion of rights between which there may be collision, it is difficult to avoid a certain tone of harshness—a spirit the most unlike possible to that which should be, and indeed to that which actually is, in real and living exemplification. The vindication of our establishment, as far as we have proceeded in it, necessarily involves the vindication of our order from the charge—that, because supported by the state, we are therefore as if by necessary consequence, a mean and mercenary priesthood. In repelling this, we cannot but assert the real independence which belong to us; but let not the assertion of our independence be interpreted into an assertion of disrespect or defiance. What we say and say truly in the abstract, may in the concrete be never realized; and for this best and most desirable of all reasons, that the one party might never be put on the hardy and resolute defence of its prerogative, just because the other party may never have the wish or the thought to invade it. There is many an ancient and venerable possession in our land, whose rights are never called forth from their depository, or produced in court—just because they are never trampled on. And so of the rights of our church—there might be no call for the parade or for the production of them, just because there might be no contest; and we are left to the undisturbed exercise of every power which legitimately belongs to us. It is thus that for centuries, nay for a whole millennium, we can imagine a prosperous and a pacific union, between the church on the one hand and the state upon the other—a union most fruitful in blessings to both—the church rendering to the state that most precious of all services, the rearing of a virtuous and orderly and loyal population; and the state giving tenfold extent and efficacy to the labours of the church, by multiplying and upholding its stations all over the lands,

and providing it in fact with approaches to the door of every family. There is here no compromise of sound principle on the part of the church—for it is not in drivelling submission to the authority of man, it is in devout submission to the high authority of Heaven, that we tell our people to honour the king, to obey magistrates, to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, and meddle not with them who are given to change. Neither is there any compromise of sound policy on the part of the state—for the Christian education of the people, is the high road to all the best objects of patriotism. In such an intercourse of benefits as this, there needs not, we repeat it, be so much as a taint of worldliness. We may retain entire our apostolic fervour and our apostolic simplicity notwithstanding—pure as in the season of our most dark and trying ordeals—equally pure in the sunshine of blandness and cordiality, between a Christian church and an enlightened Government.

SERMON XXXVIII.

On the Honour due to all Men.

"Honour all men.——Honour the king."—1 PETER. ii. 17.

To honour all men is alike the lesson of Philosophy and Religion. He who studies Humanity, not according to its accidental distinctions in society, but in its great and general characteristics—he who looks to its moral nature as a piece of curious and interesting mechanism, all whose processes are as accurately exemplified in the mind of the poorest individual, as the laws or the constructions of anatomy are in his body—he whose office it is to contemplate the fabric of its principles and powers, and who can recognise even in humble life the goodliest specimens of both—with him the distinctions of rank are apt to be lost and forgotten, in the homage which he renders to man, simply as the possessor of a constitution that has so often exercised and regaled his faculties as an object of liberal curiosity. The homeliest peasant bears within the confines of his inner man, that very tablet on the lines and characters of which the highest philosopher may for years perhaps have been most intensely gazing. All the secrets of our wondrous economy are deposited there; and, in the heart even of the most unlettered man, the memory, and the understanding, and the imagination, and the conscience, and every other function and property of the yet inaccessible soul are all in busy operation. To the owner of such an unexplored microcosm, we attach somewhat of the same reverence which we entertain for some profound and hidden mystery—and he who has laboured most anxiously to seize upon the mysteries of our nature, and therefore feels most profoundly how deep and how inscrutable they are, he perhaps is the most predisposed by his pursuits and his habits to "honour all men."

Somewhat of the same sentiment is impressed upon us in the midst of a crowd—or as we pass along that street which is alive from morning to night with its endless flow of passengers. We are aware of no contemplation, that is more fitted to annihilate in one's own mind the importance of self; or rather to multiply this feeling, and make it be transferred by us to each individual of that restless and eager population by whom we are surrounded. To think of each having within the precincts of his own bosom, a chamber of thoughts and purposes, and fond imaginations as warm and teeming as our own, and of the busy history that is going on there; that every one of the immense multitude is the centre of his own distinct amphitheatre, which, however unknown to us, is the universe to him; that each meditative countenance of the vast and interminable number bespeaks a play of hopes, and wishes, and

interests within, in every way as active, and felt to be of as great magnitude and urgency, as we experience in ourselves —further to think that should my own heart cease its palpitations, and were the light of my own wakeful spirit to be extinguished for ever, that still there would be a world as full of life and intelligence as before; to think of myself as an unmissed or unnoticed thing among the myriads who are around me, or rather to think that with each of these myriads there are desires as vivid, and sensibilities as deep, and cares as engrossing, and social or family affections as tender, as those which I carry about with me in that little world to which no one eye hath access but the eye of my own consciousness—there is a humility that ought to be impressed by such a contemplation; or, if it do not utterly abase the reckoning that we have of ourselves, it ought at least to exalt our reckoning of all other men, and teach us to hold in honour those, who in the workings of the same nature and fellowship of the very same interests so thoroughly partake with us.

It is true, that, in what may be called the outward magnitude of these interests, there is a wide distance between a sovereign and his subject—between the cares of an empire, and the cares of a small household economy. That is, the empire externally speaking is greater than the household—while inwardly the cares, the cogitations, the sensibilities of the heart, whether oppressive or joyful, may be altogether the same. They be a different set of objects, wherewith the monarch is conversant, and that keep in play the system of his thoughts and emotions, just as it is upon a different sort of food that his blood circulates or that his physical system is upholden. But as the peasant is like to him in respect of anatomy, so, with all the diversity of circumstances, he is substantially like to him, in the frame and mechanism of his spirit. The outward causes by which each is excited are vastly different; but the inward excitement of both is the same—and, could we explore the little world that is in each of the two bosoms, we should recognise in each the same busy rotation of hopes and fears, and wishes and anxieties. If it be indeed a just calculation, that there is a superiority, a surpassing worth in the moral which far outweighs the material, then, let the cottage be as widely dissimilar from the palace as it may, there is a similarity between their inhabitants, not in that which is minute, but in that which is momentous —and our weightiest arguments for honouring the king bear with efficacy upon the lesson, to honour all men.

And moreover, let us but rate the importance of one thinking and living spirit, when compared with all the mute and unconscious materialism which is in our universe. Without such a spirit, the whole of visible existence were but an idle waste—a nothingness—for what is beauty were there no eye to look upon it, and what is music were there no ear to listen, and what is matter in all its rich and wondrous varieties without a spectator mind to be regaled by the contemplation of them? One might conceive the very panorama that now surrounds us—the same earth and sea and skies that we now look upon—the same graces on the face of terrestrial nature, the same rolling wonders in the firmament—yet without one spark of thought or animation throughout the unpeopled amplitude. This in effect were nonentity. To put out all the consciousness that is in nature were tantamount to the annihilation of nature; and the lighting up again of but one mind in the midst of this desolation, would of itself restore significancy to the scene, and be more than equivalent to the first creation of it. In other words, one living mind is of more worth than a dead universe—or there is that in every single peasant to which I owe sublimer homage, than, if untenanted of mind, I should yield to all the wealth of this lower world, to all those worlds that roll in spaciousness and in splendour through the vastnesses of astronomy.

Our Saviour Himself hath instituted the comparison between a world and a soul—and, whether both were alike perishable or alike enduring, His estimate of the soul's superiority would hold. He founds his computation on our brief tenure of all that is earthly, and on the magnitude of those abiding interests which wait the immortal spirit in other scenes of existence. All men are immortal. There is a grandeur of destination here, that far outweighs all the pride and pre-

tension of this world's grandeur. Those lordly honours which some men fetch from the antiquity of their race are but poor indeed, when compared with that more signal honour which all men have in the eternity of their duration. In respect of immortality, the great and the small ones of the earth stand on an equal eminence—and in respect of the death which comes before it, both have to sink to the same humiliating level. The prince shares with the peasant in the horror and loathsomeness of death—the peasant shares with the prince in the high distinction of immortality. It is because in the poorest man's bosom, there resides an undying principle—it is because of that endless futurity which is before him, and in the progress of which all the splendours and obscurations of our present state will be speedily forgotten—it is because, though of yesterday, the bliss and the brightness of coming centuries may be upon his path; and, whatever the complexion of his future history shall be, yet the sublime character of eternity shall rest upon it—it is because of these that humanity, however it be clothed and conditioned in this evanescent world, should be the object of an awful reverence; and if, by reason of those perishable glories which sit on a monarch's brow for but one generation, it be imperative to honour the king—then, by reason of those glories which the meanest may attain to, and which are to last for ever, it is still more imperative to honour all men.

It is in virtue of the natural equality between man and man, of the like noble prospects and the like high capacities among all the members of the species—that we have never hesitated on the question of popular or plebeian education; and when it is asked, how far should the illumination of the lower orders in society be permitted to go?—we do not scruple to reply, that it should be to the very uttermost of what their taste and their time and their convenience will permit. There have been a dread and a jealousy upon this topic wherewith we cannot at all sympathize—somewhat of the same alarm for the progress of scholarship among the working classes, that is felt for the progress of sedition—just as if the admission of light amongst them were to throw the whole mass into a state of busy and mischievous fermentation—and some great coming disorder were surely to result from the growing intelligence of those who form the vast majority of our commonwealth. And, in addition to what injury it is apprehended the social edifice at large might sustain from the elevation of the popular mind, it is further thought that individually it is fraught with uttermost discomfort to the people themselves; that it will induce a restlessness, a discontent, a wayward ambition, wholly unsuited to their state as labourers; that henceforward they will spurn at the ignoble drudgeries of their lot; and that the fruit of making them scholars will be wholly to unhinge and unsettle them as workmen. And when once this impatience becomes general, a certain fierce and feverish aspiring, it is feared, will run throughout that class in society who even now by the superiority of their muscular force are enough formidable—and of whom the terror is, that when once a mental force is superadded to the muscular, they will overleap all the barriers of public safety, and be the fell instruments of a wild and wasteful anarchy over the face of the land.

This is not altogether the place for exposing what we deem to be the utter groundlessness of such imaginations; and therefore, without touching at all on the political apprehension lest Education should lodge a power that is dangerous in the hands of the labouring classes,—we shall just say of the personal, or of that which relates to the habits and character of the individual labourer, that we believe it to be scarcely ever if at any time realized. We positively find them to be among the best symptoms of a trusty and well-conditioned mechanic, if, upon entering his house, we find the humble library upon his shelves—or if in taking account of his hours, we find the time which many give to evening dissipation given by him to the attendance or the preparations of a mechanic school. There is no such discrepancy between the powers and the principles of our complex nature, no such awkward sorting or balancing of parts in the human constitution, as that there must be a stifling of some in order to make room for the right and prosperous operation of the others—as, for example, that

all liberal curiosity, all appetite for the informations of science should be kept in check, lest industry be relaxed, or the cares of a family provision be altogether forgotten. The ingredients of our compound being are really in far better adjustment than that all should be so very apt to go into disorder, upon any one of them being fostered into activity by the excitement of its own peculiar gratification—and it will be found that a taste for literature, and patient assiduity in labour, and a reflective prudence in every matter of family economics, and a habit of sound and good workmanship on the one hand, with a well exercised intellect even in the subjects of general speculation upon the other—that all these may be at work, and in fullest harmony together with one and the same individual. Instead of spoiling him as an artisan, they would only transform him into an artisan of a higher caste—and as there is a general movement all over the land for a higher education to our people, let us do nothing to curb the energies of their aspiring intellect—but rather rejoice in the bright anticipation that must at length be realized, of a well-taught and a highly lettered peasantry. On a progress like this we would lay no limitation. Let it go freely and indefinitely onwards—nor be afraid, as many are, lest there should be too much of schooling or even too much of science for the common people. That were a noble achievement in political economy, did it point out the way by which, through better wages and less work, the children of handicraft and of hard labour might be somewhat lightened of their toils. And that were a still nobler achievement in philanthropy, could their then wider and more frequent intervals of repose be reclaimed from loose and loathsome dissipation—could even an infant but growing taste for philosophy be made to supplant all the coarser depravities of human vice—and they, admitted to more of companionship than they now have with men of a higher walk in society, give frequent demonstration, that, even amid the drudgery of their humble condition, there was among them much of the unquenched fire of genius, and a still vigorous play of those perceptions and those powers by which our common nature is ennobled.

Having said thus much for that education which gives the knowledge of science to the common people—we feel ourselves placed on still higher vantage ground, when we plead for that education to them which gives the knowledge of religion. If we hold the one to be desirable, we hold the other to be indispensable. In our estimation there is a certain narrowness of soul, among those who are jealous even of their most daring ascents into the region of a higher scholarship; but to lay an interdict upon all scholarship, is in truth nothing better than the midnight darkness of Popery. And yet, in certain quarters of our land, there still lurks, in deep and settled inveteracy, that intolerance which would withhold the very alphabet from our population; and though in one respect, it is the key to the revealed mysteries of heaven, the instrument for unlocking that gospel which was designed so specially for the ignorant and the poor—yet still there be some who, aloft from all sympathy with the lower orders, can admit of no higher demand from them than the mere wants of their animal existence. The eternity of the poor does not enter into their care or computation at all. They are viewed in scarcely any other light than as the instruments of labour, as so many pieces of living mechanism that have their useful application along with those other springs and principles of action which keep the busy apparatus of our great manufactories in play—their limbs as the levers of a certain kind of machinery, and the spirit that is within them but as that moving force by which the human enginery is set agoing. The immortality of this spirit is as little regarded, as if it were indeed but a vapour that passeth away. It is valued only because of the materialism which it animates, or of the motion which by means of a curious and complicated framework, it can impress on any tangible thing that is transformed thereby into some article of merchandise. It is thus that Humanity is apt to be addressed or treated with, singly for the physical strength which it might be made to yield in the service of busy artisanship—and, without one ungenerous reflection on the great capitalists of our land, it is thus that sometimes at least there is a certain grossness of mercantile

spirit, in virtue of which, our nature, in despite of all its noble capacities, and the exceeding grandeur of its ultimate destination is very apt to be grossly brutalized.

It is therefore the more refreshing, when, in some densely peopled territory that is all in a fervour with the smoke and the din and the unremitting turmoil of its many fabrications, there is seen an interest to arise in the religion of the assembled host, and on the side of their immortal well-being—when, for so wide and plenteous a harvest there at length appears a band of resolute and devoted labourers—when, in the midst of a field so rich in the materials for a great spiritual manufacture that hath its gains and its proceeds in eternity, men are to be found of compass enough and Christianity enough for this highest enterprise of charity—when a company is formed with a design and on a speculation so magnificent, as far to surpass the sublimest anventures of commerce—and, instead of that transformation on the rude produce of our country, which is effected by the labour of human hands, it is proposed to go forth on the people of the country as the subjects of a noble transformation; and to impress upon human souls, now in the darkness and earthliness of nature, a glory that is unperishable.

It is a reproach to the spirit of merchandise,—when in its exclusive demand for the physical strength and service of human beings, it gives but little regard to their eternity—yet among the sons of merchandise, we do meet with many of those zealous and enlightened philanthropists, who, by their efforts in the cause both of common and of Christian scholarship, have done much to redeem the imputation. There is indeed the grossest injustice in every imputation that leads to the fastening of an odium or an obloquy, upon a whole order—and we might here take the opportunity of saying in reference to another order, and when we hear so much of an alleged conspiracy on the part of monarchs against the illumination of our species, it is far indeed from holding universally. There is a growing liberality upon the subject among all the classes of society—and as surely as workmasters are now learning that education furnishes them with their best and most valuable servants—so surely will Kings also learn, that the firmest basis upon which their authority can be upholden, is a virtuous and a well schooled peasantry.

The ancient prejudice upon this question is now on all hands rapidly subsiding. The cause of popular ignorance is no longer incorporated, as it wont to be, with the cause of loyalty and established order. Even they who sit in the highest places, and were at all times the most sensitively fearful of any new element, that, when brought into play, might derange and unsettle the existing framework of society—even they can now look without alarm on that heaving of the popular mind towards a higher scholarship, which is now fermenting and spreading over the whole face of the British commonwealth. We are aware of nothing more truly important to the cause of education, than some recent practical testimonies of our landed aristocracy to the worth of Scotland's parochial teachers, and their offer of a helping hand to secure and to speed the ascent of our common people, though already perhaps the most lettered in Europe or in the world, even above the level of their present acquirements. There could not more authentic demonstration have been given, and from a quarter more thoroughly unsuspicious, to the safety of a learning for the vulgar—and there is nought more delightful than thus to behold the upper classes of society, giving welcome and encouragement to the lower for a nearer assimilation with themselves in that knowledge which is more honourable than wealth, in those mental accomplishments which shed its truest grace and dignity upon our nature.

There are two opposite directions in which we have to witness what may be called an ultra or extreme politics. One of those extremes is now getting fast obsolete, at least in Scotland—for in our sister country there is still an inveteracy about it, which may not give way for perhaps one or two generations. To picture it forth most effectually, we might seize in imagination upon some one individual by whom it is realized—who, frank and generous, and kind-hearted in all the relations of private society, yet on every question of public or parliamentary war

fare shows all the fiercest antipathies of high and antiquated cavaliership—who, merciful and munificent in all his leadings with his own people, yet eyes a boding mischief in every new and advancing movement by the people of the land—who deems it perhaps one of the glories of Old England to have a jovial and well-fed peasantry, yet would feel the education of them to be a raising of them out of their places, and so a disturbance on the sober and settled orthodoxy of other days—who fears a lurking sectarianism in this active and widely diffused scholarship—that might afterwards break forth into outrage on England's venerated throne, and her noble hierarchy; and therefore would vastly rather than this age of philanthropic restlessness, have the age brought back again, when pastime and holiday, and withal a veneration for Church, had full ascendant over the hearts and habits of a then unlettered population. Still in many of England's princely halls, in many a baronial residence, there exists a feeling that her golden time has passed away—and that this new device of a popular education is among the deadliest of the destroyers. High in loyalty, and devoted by all the influences of sentiment, and ancestry, and sworn partisanship to the prerogatives of monarchy; they honour the king—but, overlooking the intellect, and the capacity, and the immortal nature that reside even in the meanest of his subjects, and so regardless as they are of the still higher prerogatives of mind; they do not and they know not how to honour all men.

But in counterpart to this, there is another extreme that to our taste is greatly more offensive than the former—when the cause of education is vilified by mixing up with it in the meantime, that accursed thing which education at length will utterly exterminate—when a mechanic school is made the vehicle of an outrageous disaffection to all authority, and a mechanic publication breathes the fierceness of radicalism throughout all its pages—when one cannot in any way devise either for the religion or the science of our lower orders, but this unclean spirit must insinuate and turn it all to loathsomeness; and every honest effort to obtain a more enlightened peasantry is either paralyzed or poisoned, by the obtruded alliance of men, who bear no other regard to the people than as the instruments of some great public or political overthrow. Still it vouches nobly for the good of a people's scholarship, that this abuse is chiefly exemplified in that land where they are just emerging from ignorance, and that in our own more lettered country it is comparatively unknown—that it is there and not here where this cause has been seized upon by demagogues, who, while they would flatter the multitude into the belief that they honour all men, give full manifestation by all their writings and their ways, that they do not honour the king.

It is in such conflicts of human passion and human party, that Christianity comes forth in the meekness of wisdom, and points out to us the more excellent way. It unites loyalty to the King with love, nay reverence, for the very humblest of his subject population—and can both do homage to the dignity of office that sits upon the one, and to those exalted capacities, both of worth and intellect, which lie in wide and wealthy diffusion through the other. There is nought of the pusillanimous in its devotion to the Crown, and nought of the factious and the turbulent in the descents which it makes among the common people. We have felt that glow which the presence of a monarch can awaken, when, instead of the crouching servility of bondsmen, we are conscious of nothing but the generous and high-minded enthusiasm of gallant chivalry. And equal to this is the pure and philanthropic triumph which the spectacle of a beggar's school is fit to awaken, when instead of a fiery sedition lighted up in the heart, and rankling its mischievous fermentations there, the mind indulges in the soothing perspective of that brighter day, when the whole community of our empire shall be moulded into a harmonious and well ordered family. To call forth the energies of the popular mind by the power of a high education being made to bear upon it, will most surely add to the stability of the throne, while it must serve to lift and to embellish the whole platform of society. It will speed the progress of the species, but not along a track of revolutionary violence. The moral perfectibility of the

infidel may call for the demolition both of altars and of thrones—but the operations of the Christian philanthropist leave the fabric of our civil polity untouched; and, in that Millennium, after which he aspires, he sees Kings to be the nursing fathers, and Queens the nursing mothers, of our Zion. He has no fellowship either with those who would revile the monarch, or who would refuse to enlighten the people—and, though fired with the hopes of some great and coming enlargement, he founds them on the prophecies of a Book, whose precepts within the utterance of one breath, and placed together in the same text, are to honour the King and to honour all men.

SERMON XXXIX.

On the Moral Influence of Fidelity.

"Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."—TITUS ii. 10.

IT is the duty of the Christian minister to bring forward not one part of the divine will, but all the parts of it—and whatever he sees urged and insisted upon in the Bible, he lies under the solemn obligation of urging and insisting upon it also. Now it is remarkable, that, when urging some of the commandments, he is looked upon as more religiously employed, than when urging some other of the commandments. There are certain subjects which do not carry to the eye of many, the same aspect of godliness with others. A sermon on sabbath breaking, for example, would be regarded as a more characteristic exercise, and as more allied with the solemn and appropriate functions of the pulpit, than a sermon upon theft; and, generally speaking, while the duties of the first table are listened to by the more serious professors of Christianity with a pious and respectful feeling of their high importance—it may be observed that the duties of the second table, when urged in all their minuteness, and brought forward in all their varieties, and illustrated by references to the homely and familiar experience of human life, are looked upon as having a certain degree of earthliness about them—to be as much inferior in point of religiousness to the duties of the first table, as the employments of a common week-day are inferior to the employments of the sabbath—in a word, while the one bears to many the aspect of sacredness, the other bears the aspect of secularity—and when a minister gives his strength and his earnestness for a whole sermon to the latter, there is a feeling among his hearers that he has descended from that high ground on which a godly or an orthodox minister loves to expatiate.

We forbear at present to enter into the explanation of this very notable peculiarity, though it does admit we think of a most interesting explanation. The thing complained of, forms a serious obstacle in the way of our attempts to enforce the whole will of God, and to explain the whole of his counsel. If there be any part of that will of which the exposition is resisted as a evry odd and uncommon and perhaps ridiculous subject from the pulpit, how shall we be able to command a reverential hearing for it? In what way shall we establish the authority of God over all the concerns of a man's history? Should not the solemnity of religious obligation be made to overspread the whole field and compass of human affairs?—and if it be not so is not this disposing God from the supremacy which belongs to Him? Is it not just saying that there are places and occasions in which we will not have Him to reign over us? Is it not disowning His right of having all things done to His glory? And those hearers who love to be told of what they owe to God on the sabbath and in the holy days of sacrament and prayer—but who love not to be told

of what they owe Him in their shops and in their market places and in their every-day employments—they are just narrowing the limits of His jurisdiction, and with all their seeming reverence for godliness as the only high and appropriate theme for the pulpit, they are in fact wresting from God his sovereignty over the great bulk of human existence. With the quit-rent of a few occasional acknowledgements, they are for securing the mighty remainder of time to themselves—and are for putting off with fragments that Being who demands of all His creatures, the homage of an entire service—the incense of a perpetual offering.

We should like all hearers to feel the religiousness of that topic which this text leads us to insist upon. We should like them to annex as serious a feeling of solemnity and obligation to the eighth of God's commandments, as to the fourth of His commandments. Both were announced in thunder from mount Sinai. Both were heard to issue in the same voice of authority from the throne of the lawgiver. The violations of both are written in the book of God's remembrance; and they are ranked among the bad deeds done in the body, which will bring down from the judgment-seat the same awful doom upon the children of iniquity. The place which the commandment possesses in the catalogue is surely of no great consequence in the matter. Enough that it be a commandment. Enough for one and for all of us that thus saith the Lord. He orders one thing, and He orders another. If the one thing must be observed with reverence, because He orders it—there is precisely the same reason for the other thing being also observed with reverence. And if "sanctify the sabbath-day and keep it holy" be a godly and religious subject, then do we contend that, "Thou shalt not steal" is a godly and a religious subject also.

In this case the minister has no choice. If the consciences of any of his hearers are blind upon this subject, that is the very reason why he should labour to open and to enlighten them. He stands charged with the office of expounding and urging and solemnly insisting upon all the requisitions of the Bible. If he do not warn the sinner from his way, the sinner will die in his iniquity, but his blood will be required of him. This is perfectly decisive as to his conduct. It is with him a matter of self-interest, as well as of duty, to warn his hearers against all sin—and, knowing as he does that there is an awful day of reckoning before them, that he must appear in the midst of them at the bar of God, that he will be called upon to give an account of them and be examined upon this, whether he has watched over the souls of his people, and faithfully attempted to guard them against all error, and to warn them against all unrighteousness—woe be to him if he is deterred by any senseless or ignorant levity whatever, from coming forward with a faithful and a firm exposition of the truth, or from sounding in their ears this awful testimony of God's abhorrence of the sin of stealing, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall first endeavour to explain what the precise sin is which the text warns us against. We shall secondly insist on its exceeding sinfulness, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it. And thirdly we shall press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The sin of the text receives a particular name, and it must therefore receive a particular explanation. It is not called stealing, though it be certainly a species of it. Stealing is neither more nor less than taking to oneself what belongs to another and what he does not give. We should apply this term to the act of a man who entered into another house than that in which he tarried, and bore away of the moveables he found in it—or to the act of a man who came to another farm than that on which he laboured, and carried off such produce as he could lift away with him—or to the act of a man who made out his access into a shop or a workhouse belonging to another master, and abstracted such money or such goods as he could lay his hand upon. There are so many acts of theft—and to give a clear idea of what that is which turns an act of theft into an act of purloining, we have only to conceive that, instead of another entering the house, a

servant within it were to help himself to such things as he had access to, without any understood allowance from the master or the mistress who employed him—or that, instead of another coming to a farm, a labourer belonging to it were to make a daily and a weekly habit of secreting a part of its produce, for the purpose of feeding his own little stock, or helping out the maintenance of his young family—or that, instead of another finding his way into your shop or your workhouse, the man you employed to keep the one or to work in the other, were to pocket for his own use what he thinks he might bear away without too great a hazard of detection. All these are so many undoubted examples of theft—but such a theft as would more readily be characterised by the term purloining. To steal is to take that which is not our own. To purloin is to take that which is not our own—but then the thing so taken must be that which we have in trust, or that to which our situation as an agent or a servant or an overseer gives us free and frequent access. When purloining is done upon a large scale it sometimes changes its name, though not its nature. It is then called an embezzlement. To embezzle is quite equivalent to purloin in the nature of the act, though greater in the extent of it. Thus we have heard of the embezzlement of public stores, of the embezzlement of the royal treasury. It is an act of theft performed by a confidential agent of the crown—and we have succeeded in the object of all these explanations, if we have led our hearers to perceive the reason why Paul addresses the advice of the text to people in a particular situation. They are in the situation of servants—and, taking in the 9th verse, the whole advice runs thus, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

We now proceed in the second place to insist on the exceeding sinfulness of this sin, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it.

The first palliation is a kind of tacit one, by which the understanding is imposed upon, and the conscience quieted, merely through the change of name which this crime has undergone. Because it is not commonly called stealing, it is not conceived to have the disgrace or the odiousness of stealing. There is a wonderful power of imposition in words—and how many a purloiner may quiet all that is troublesome within him by the reflection that what he does is not stealing; it is only taking. Thus may he try to escape the imputation of stealing, by merely giving a different name to his iniquity—but, if the thing thus taken be not his to take, it is to all intents and purposes, stealing—he merits the full disgrace of being called a thief—and, what is still more awful than all the disgrace with which this world can cover him, he is guilty of a sin, which, if persisted in, will most infallibly exclude him from the inheritance of the kingdom of God. To undeceive him, he should be made distinctly to know that there is no difference whatever in the sins; that an angry and offended God looks with equal displeasure upon both, and will assign to each the same awful punishment in the great day of reckoning. This low work of purloining is just stealing under another name. It is taking what belongs to another, and what that other has not given. Every understanding will acknowledge, that, however it may be glossed over by another and a milder designation, it is an act of theft; and what every understanding will acknowledge, we want every conscience to feel. But we go further. We take up a principle contained in our Shorter Catechism, where it is said, in answer to the question, "Are all sins equally heinous in the sight of God?" That "some sins, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others." Now purloining contains in it an aggravation which does not belong to a bare and simple example of stealing. The stranger who does not know me, and whom I never trusted, may come to my premises and steal of my property. But the servant who purloins does know me, lives under my roof, is maintained by my wages, and, above all, has had a confidence placed in him which he has chosen to abuse and to violate. I left a door open, or I made over a charge,

or I invested him with a particular commission, and why? because I had faith in his integrity and discretion. The stranger thief is guilty of one vice—an act of dishonesty. The household thief is dishonest too; but he is more than this. He has betrayed the trust I put in him. He has repaid my good opinion of him, by an act of ingratitude and an act of unfaithfulness. I was led away by his fair appearances; and he has turned out a hypocrite. He has added to the guilt of stealing, the guilt of cunning and falsehood and habitual concealment. These are aggravations which make the purloining of the servant far more provoking to him who suffers by it, than the depredations of the nightly vagabond. But they are not only more provoking to man—they are more provoking to a just and a holy God. The aggravations which we have just now spoken of will tell on the awful sentence of the great day. The discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart sees and judges of every one of them; and when the time cometh that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, the low pilferments of the farm, of the family, and of the workshop, will appear to the shame and condemnation of the guilty.

But there is another plea on which the purloiner tries to find himself something like an acquittal, from the shame and the remorse of his secret iniquities. However great at the end of months or of years his depredations may be in the amount, yet, to escape detection, he is forced to make them small in the detail. The distinct and single theft of every one day is but a petty affair—and his conscience easily falls into the snare, that, as what he does take at any one time is so very little it is not worth the thinking of. But what right has he, we would ask, to make any addition to the eighth commandment? God says, "Thou shalt not steal," and then he brings the commandment to a close. He does not say thou shalt not steal much, leaving us at freedom to steal a little, and to judge how little we may steal with innocence and safety. He says, thou shalt not steal, and then he leaves off. If we steal the value of a farthing, it is a stolen farthing. It is evidence enough to convict of a breach of the eighth commandment, by which we are enjoined not o steal at all. Little as we may think of it, it is enough to convict us of disobedience to the entire and absolute commandment of God—and it will turn out the accursed thing, which, if not repented of and not turned from, will be the death and the condemnation of our souls. He that is unjust in the least, says our Saviour, is unjust also in much. It may be so little as to be the very least—but if stolen, it is an act of injustice—and He who knew what was in man says, that he who can do the very least act of injustice can do a great one. O how many go to Hell with what they account small sins. Small sin! is sin a small matter? If we have stolen to the value of a single grain, we have broken the law of God; and do we call that an affair of small consequence? The moment we stretch forth our hand to what is another's be it ever so little, we have broken the line which lies betwixt duty and rebellion. We have got over the wall which separates lawful from forbidden ground, and however little way we have got on the forbidden ground, still we are on it—and, if apprehended there and brought to the bar of judgment, we shall be treated as criminals. Go not, ye purloiners and household thieves, to delude your consciences any more on this subject. Go not to make any distinction which the law of God does not make. Think not that you will escape condemnation; because the thing stolen is so very little. Think not that this plea will serve you with God, whose law must be fulfilled to the very last jot and tittle of it—and we tell you that if you ever pray and lift up your hands unto God—then though you have stolen only to the amount of a morsel or a fragment which does not belong to you, God will look upon your hands and see them to be unclean. The defilement of the thing stolen sticks to them; and He beholding it will turn in indignation from your prayers and your offering.

The next plea we propose to your attention is, that the master out of whose stock we have purloined is rich—he will not miss it, and it can do him no harm. Still making additions of their own you will observe to the law of God. Still doing as the Pharisees did before them—making the commandment of God of

none effect by their traditions, and teaching for doctrines the commandments and inventions of men. God says thou shalt not steal. He does not say thou shalt not steal from the poor, leaving us at liberty to steal from the rich whenever we have opportunity. The distinction betwixt rich and poor in this matter is a distinction of their own. By making this plea they not only disobey God; but they insult Him by offering to mend His law, and bringing forward what they think a better one of their own. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. And that word is—let him that stole steal no more. There is no allusion to rich or poor in this injunction. Nay, in the text it is stealing from the rich that is expressly forbidden. The poor, generally speaking, are the servants; and the rich, generally speaking, are the masters—and servants are ordered not to purloin from their masters, but to show all good fidelity. No, there is nothing for it, but an entire separation from this unclean and accursed practice. It is an express violation of God's law; and admits of no plea, no palliation. It is a dangerous experiment to trifle with sin, and to venture upon what we are pleased to think the lesser shades and degrees of it. The moment that sin is committed, even in the very least degrees of it, the fence which separates obedience from rebellion is broken down. After we have got over that fence, there is no saying how far we may go. After a garden wall is once leaped, it is not doing much more to enter its most precious depositaries, and spoil it of its fairest and richest productions. And here we may repeat, by the way, that the first sin ever committed by man forms a striking refutation of the two pleas which we are now attempting to expose. The thing stolen was a fruit. The master he stole it from was the Lord of Heaven and of Earth—to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills, and who sits surrounded with the wealth of innumerable worlds. What becomes of the smallness of the sin now? It was just this sin which banished Adam from paradise, which broke up the communion between earth and heaven—which entailed ruin on a whole species of moral and intelligent creatures. The infidel laughs at the story, and with all the parade of an enlightened wisdom he counts it ridiculous—he thinks how paltry the offence—and how big the mischief and the ruin which are stated to have sprung from it. But he only betrays the grossness of a mind, which cannot rise above the estimates and the calculations of an ordinary man—which looks no further than to the visible performance, and is blind to the only principle which gives to the performance its moral character. It is not in the magnitude of the thing done, that the chief magnitude of the offence lies. It is the state of mind implied by the doing of it. Had Adam rooted out every tree of paradise, and dismantled the garden of all its beauties—we might have thought that his offence lay in the material extent of the injury that was done by him. But Adam did no more than steal a forbidden fruit; and, for any evil performed by his hand, Eden might have remained in all its bloom and in all its loveliness. But in proportion as the material hurt was small, is the grandeur and the entireness of the moral lesson conveyed by it. It leads our single eye to the foulness of that turpitude which lies in disobedience to God. The thing done was small in itself—but it carried rebellion in its principle. Thus saith the Lord, was the sanction which lay upon it—and that sanction was trampled upon. When God said Let there be light, and there was light—we look upon this as a sublime and wonderful evidence of His power. When God said, In the day he eateth he shall die, and he did eat, and from that moment a cloud of malignant darkness gathered upon the head of the offender, and hangs to this hour over his distant posterity—we look upon this as an evidence no less sublime of His truth and of His righteousness. The simplicity of the visible act enables us to see the spiritual character of this great transaction in all its majesty—nor can the senseless levities we have heard on the subject of Adam's fall, keep us from viewing it as one in dignity with the other events of that wonderful period, when the Almighty had spread a new creation around him, and displayed the attributes of His high and unchangeable nature among the beings whom He had formed.

Take this lesson to yourselves, ye pur

loiners, who are going on deceiving your consciences, and heaping ruin and condemnation upon your deluded souls. You think the thing purloined is so very small, and the master you stole it from is so very rich. But what right have you to set your thinkings and your excusings against the awful authority of "Thus saith the Lord?" It is no matter how small the theft. It is no matter how rich the man who suffers by it. God's authority is trampled upon by the act. His Holy Bible is despised. His judgment is bid defiance to—and the saying of the Apostle Paul is as much slighted and undervalued as if no Apostle had ever said it, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God. O, if any of you have been hitherto deceived upon this subject, suffer now the word of exhortation. Go not to trifle any longer with the precious interest of your souls. Resist not what we say, because it touches painfully upon your practices or your consciences. We mean no offence. We want to stir up no anger among you. We bring forward no railing accusation. It is the general and unceasing importance of the subject which has led us to fix upon it; for we give you our solemn assurance, that we know of no act of purloining committed by any one of you—nor do we have in our eye a single guilty individual. For any thing we know, there is not one of you who is not nobly superior to the slightest taint and degree of this iniquity—and, in this case, the sole use of this sermon may be that you shall be kept clean through the word now spoken to you. But lest there should be a purloiner in this congregation, we think it our high and awfully incumbent duty, to stretch forth our hand that we may arrest and reclaim him from that road of perdition on which he is hastening—and surely you will grant us your indulgence when we say, that in doing what we have done, we have only lifted our testimony against what we honestly believe would land him in everlasting burnings if it be persisted in.

But let us now endeavour, in the third place, to press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity—by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let us observe, however, that the servants whom Titus was to exhort, were among the people of his own congregation. They formed a Christian community; and, whatever kind of people this designation may be applied to now-a-days, it was applied in those days to men, who, in embracing the profession of the faith, formally renounced the errors or the idolatries of their former years—to men, who, in making this profession, must generally speaking have been moved to it by a real belief in the great and prominent truths of that new religion which was proposed to them: Or, in other words, the exhortation of the text is recommended by Paul to be addressed to men, who, not only embraced the profession of the faith, but had embraced the faith—to men who felt the influence of the great doctrines of Christianity—to men who had God revealed to them in their Saviour, and knew of the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and were under that process of teaching which the grace of God is employed in carrying on, and the object of which is that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. We know well the use that has been made of these considerations. Bring, it is said, these dissuasives against their evil practices to bear upon Christian servants. Exhort those who are already in the faith; and, as to those who are not in the faith, including, for any thing we know, the great mass of servants who are now before us, suspend all our attacks upon their sins, till we have brought them to the Saviour—furnish them with a Christian motive, before we press them to a Christian reformation—make them the subjects of grace, by giving them that faith which has the promise of the Spirit, ere we attempt that teaching which can only be done effectually by the grace that bringeth salvation. Now, it is all very true that no obedience is pure in its principle, but that to which we are constrained by the love of God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus—no obedience is successful in its accomplishment, but that which is wrought through the strength of Him who confers power to become the children of God only on those who believe—no obedience is acceptable to the Father,

but such as is offered up in the name of the Son. All this is most true—and it must be our incessant object to grow in such obedience, by growing in the only principle which can actuate and uphold it. But recollect, that there are expedients set agoing by the wisdom of God for bringing men to Christ—and there are considerations addressed to sinners for the purpose of convincing them of danger, and forcing them to flee for refuge unto Christ—and there are certain performances, which, in the very act of coming unto Christ, they are called upon to do—and, therefore it is, that, though at this moment you may be out of Christ and away from Him, we count it a seasonable topic for each and all of you, when we tell you of the exceeding sinfulness of every one sin with which you are chargeable. It is right that every kind of unrighteousness should be made manifest to your consciences—for the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. It is right that every purloiner should be made to know what thousands and thousands more of purloiners are not aware of, that the heavy judgment of God lies upon them for that offence which they are apt to look on as so light and so common, and so natural and so excusable. It is right they should be made to understand how great the danger is, and what the place of security to flee to—and surely, the more they are burdened with a sense of the wrath of God, the more will they feel the weight and importance of the saying, that unless they believe in Christ this wrath abideth on them. And surely if Christ said at the very outset, repent and believe the Gospel—if He said, he that followeth after me must forsake all—if the grace of God, at the first moment of its appearance, taught men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts—we are not out of place when we tell the most ignorant and graceless purloiner among you, to turn him to Christ, that he may obtain the forgiveness of all his misdoings; and when we tell him within the compass of the same breathing to turn him from his iniquities—that the man who keeps by his sins is in fact keeping away from the Saviour—that he is loving darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil—that he is not coming to the Saviour, for he is not doing what all who come, must and will do—he is not stirring himself up in the business of forsaking all. The evil and inveterate habits of an unfaithful servant he will not forsake. He clings to them as so many idols that he cannot bring himself to part with. Christ, who claims the authority of his alone master, does not prevail upon him to give up the service of those sins which lord it over him. And it is, therefore, that he should know, how every day that he persists in this forbidden practice, he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and putting the grace of an offered salvation and the voice of a beseeching God away from him.

Let us therefore urge it most earnestly upon you that you consider your doings. Christ is willing to receive you; and, if you are willing to come to Him, to you belongs the whole extent of his purchased salvation. But you are not willing to come to Him, if you are more willing to retain your iniquities; and in these iniquities you will die. Sell your goods to feed the poor, says our Saviour to the young man in the Gospel, and then come and follow me; but he would not come to Him upon these terms, and his devotedness to his wealth was the bar that stood in his way to the kingdom of God. In like manner we call upon you purloiners to cleanse your hands and come to the Saviour. If you will not come upon these terms, the rich man had his bar in the way of salvation, and you have yours. He would not give up his property, and you will not give up the produce of your petty pilferments. You are not willing to come to Christ that you may have life—for, sweet as is the life which is at his giving, it is not so sweet to your taste, as is the sweetness of those stolen waters which have hitherto been your secret and your habitual enjoyment. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he is therefore called the profane Esau. How much more profane are you, who are putting the offer of a birthright in heaven away from you—and for what?—for the crumbs and fragments of your paltry depredations. From this moment we charge you to touch them no more. Bid your hand cease from its pilferments; and compel it to your bidding. If what we have said

tell upon your conscience, this very night will it tell upon your conduct. To-morrow comes, and it will find you a reforming man—earnest how to find your salvation, and busy to frame your doings that you may turn unto the Lord. You will get up from the bed of reflection, with the purpose of keeping yourself clear and aloof from your wonted dishonesties; and with a prayer that you may be strengthened in the execution of this purpose. Till we see something of this kind, we see no evidence of your yet having taken a single step to the Saviour. Keep by the purloinings against which we have been charging you; and you are not so much as moving towards Christ, nor will you ever reach Him. Cease then from them at this moment—do this in the very act of going to the Saviour and seeking after him; and who knows but this first and foremost of your visible reformations, humble as it is when compared with the accomplishments of him who stands perfect and complete in the whole will of God, who knows but it may betoken the commencement of a good work in your soul?—that awakening of the sinner's eye on which Christ has promised that he shall give light—the outset of that path which conducts from one degree of grace unto another, till you reach the stature of the full grown Christian—an earlier stage of the journey which conducts him who cometh unto Christ to all His promised manifestations, that, made to shine upon your head will make you rejoice more and more in the perfections of His righteousness, in the fulness of His grace and the freeness of His kind invitations, in the sureness of those never-failing supplies out of which you are strengthened with all might in the inner man, and enabled to do all things through the spirit which is given unto you.

We now proceed to the motive which Paul urged upon the servants he was addressing—that they might adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. We think that two very distinct, and, at the same time very affecting and important lessons, may be drawn from this single clause of the verse now before us. The first is that a man's Christianity might be made to show itself throughout the whole business of his vocation, whatever it may be—that it may be made to give a pervading expression to his whole history—that it might accompany and be at work with him throughout every doing and every exercise he can put his hand to—that, in a word, the influence of its spirit is a perennial influence, ever present in the heart, and ever sending forth a powerful and a perpetual control over the conduct. It is not merely in one thing, or in another thing, that the doctrine of Christ is capable of being adorned. It admits of being adorned in all things. Doctrine sometimes signifies the thing taught; and it sometimes signifies the process of teaching. We understand it more in the latter sense on the present occasion. Show how excellent, and how purifying, and how universal, in point of salutary influence, this teaching is. Show how completely it goes over the whole round of human performances. Show with what a comprehensive eye, it surveys the map of human life, and stamps its own colour and gives its own outline to its most remote and subordinate provinces. Let the world see, that wherever a man of Christian doctrine is present, and whatever the employment be that he is engaged with, there at all times goes along with him a living exhibition of the power and the efficacy of Christian doctrine; that he represents by every one action the character of the gospel which he professes; that the stamp of its morality may be recognised on his every distinct and separate performance; and that others may say of each and of all his doings, that this is done in the style and manner of a Christian.

When a man becomes Christian, what we would ask is the most visible expression of the change which has taken effect upon him? We are not speaking of the change in its essential character, which is neither more nor less than a thorough and aspiring devotedness to the will of that God whom he now sees by the eye of faith to be reconciled to him through the blood of an everlasting covenant. The question we are putting relates to the seen effect of this principle upon the man's outward habits and performances; and we ask which is the most notable and conspicuous effect, and such as will most readily arrest the eye and the observation

of acquaintances?—We know well what the general impression of the world is upon this subject. They think when a man undergoes that mysterious and unaccountable thing which is called conversion; the most palpable transformation it makes upon him is to turn him into a psalm-singing, a church-going, an ordinance-keeping, and a prayer-making Christian. They positively do not look for such a change on the common and week-day history of this said convert, as they do on the style and character of his sabbath observations. But yet there is something that they will look for on week days too. They will look for a more decided aspect of sobriety. They will look for a more demure and melancholy seclusion from his old acquaintances. They will look for a clear and total renunciation of all that is intemperate, and of all that is licentious. They will look for a final adieu from those habits of intoxication, of those habits of profligacy, or those habits of companionable indulgence, to which the young of every great city are introduced with a facility and a readiness so alarming to the heart of every Christian parent; and in the prosecution of which they widen by every day of thoughtlessness their departure from God; and accumulate upon them the burden of his righteous indignation; and lull their consciences into such a slumber, as to thousands and thousands more will at length sink and deepen into the sleep of death; and bring the whole power of their example to bear upon the simple and the uninitiated. And thus does the tide of corruption maintain its unabated force and fulness from one period to another; and is strengthened by yearly contributions out of the wreck of youthful integrity; and, did not the cheering light of prophecy assure us that through the omnipotence of a pure gospel better days of reformation and of virtue were to come, one would almost sit down in despair of ever making head against such a torrent of combination and of example on the side of profligacy. Nor is this despair much alleviated, though some solitary case of repentance out of a hundred should now and then be offering itself to our contemplations; and conscience should again lift its commanding voice within him, and be reinstated in that authority which she had lost; and he, breaking off his sins by righteousness, should by an act of simple and determined abandonment brave the mockery of all his associates, and betake himself to the paths of peace and of prayer and of piety.

Now, all the things of our text should lead an enlightened disciple to look for more evidence than this; and should lead a decided convert to exhibit more evidence than this. The man who adorns the gospel in all things, will most certainly be and do all that we have heretofore insisted on. But we regret that it should be so much the impression of the world, and so much the impression even of our plausible and well-looking professors, that these form outward marks of such prominency as to throw all other outward marks into the shade; and to draw an almost exclusive regard towards sobriety of manners, and sobriety of external observation, as forming the great and leading evidences of a now acquired Christianity. Now think, what prodigious effect it would give to the gospel, what an impressive testimony to its worth and excellence it would spread around the walk of every professor of it—did all that was undeviating in truth, all that was generous in friendship, all that was manly in principle, all that was untainted in honour, all that was winning in gentleness, all that was endearing in the graces and virtues of domestic society, all that was beneficent in public life, and all that was amiable in the unnoticed recesses of private history—did all these form into one beauteous corona of virtues and accomplishments, which might shed the lustre of Christianity over every field that is traversed by a professor of Christianity. The name of a convert is at all times most readily associated with sobriety and sabbath-keeping. We should like that the conduct of the professors were such as to establish a still wider association. And if it is not, it is because professors have so wofully neglected the principle of our text. It is because they have made their Christianity one thing, and their civil business another. It is because they have separated religion from humanity, and missed a truth of most obvious and most commanding evidence—that there is not so much as a single half hour in the whole current of

man's history, which the gospel might not cheer by its comforts, or guide by its rules, or enlighten by its informations and its principles. Had every professing convert proceeded upon this, the association would have gone much farther than it has actually done. It would have thrown a kind of universal emblazonment over the very name of Christianity. A man under the teaching of Jesus Christ could not be spoken of, without lighting up in the heart every feeling of confidence and affection and esteem. And only conceive how it would go to augment the power of this living and efficient testimony—did every man who plies his attendance upon church, and runs after sacraments, and whose element is to be hearing and talking of sermons, and the whole style of whose family regulation wears a complexion of sacredness—how it would tell with all the omnipotence of a charm upon the world, could we only have it to say of every such man—that the soul of honour and integrity animated all his doings—that his every word and his every bargain were immutable—that not so much as a flaw or the semblance of an impeachment ever rested on any of his transactions—that if in business, you might repose upon him—that if in company, you had nothing to fear from his pride, or his severity, or his selfishness—that if in the relations of neighbourhood, you might look for nothing from his hands but kindness and civility—that if in the officialities of public employment, you might see all the faithfulness of a man who felt the weight of duty and responsibility that were attached to it—that if the head of a family, you might behold the happiest attemperament of wisdom and of gentleness—and finally, that if in service, you might commit to him the keepership of your all; you might give your suspicions and your jealousies to the wind; and, trusting to a fidelity which no opportunity can tempt, and no power of concealment can make to swerve from the line of honesty, you might review the whole subject of his guardianship, and find how to its minutest particle that all was untouched and all was unviolated.

This conducts us to the second lesson, which we proposed to draw from the clause of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And that is that it is in the power of men and women, in the most obscure and unnoticed ranks of society, to do a thing of far greater magnificence and glory, than can be done by all the resources of a monarch, by all the commanding influence of wealth, by all the talents and the faculties of genius, by all the magic of utterance pouring forth its streams of eloquent and persuasive reasoning, by all grandeur, and all nobility, and all official consequence, when disjoined from Christian principle. Humble as ye are ye servants, there is a something ye can do which has all the greatness and all the effect of eternity stamped upon it. There is a something ye can do which the King of Glory may put down as done unto Him, and by which ye can both magnify the name and carry forward the interests of the Sun of Righteousness. There is a something ye can do by which you may be admitted into the high honour of being fellow workers with God—by which He to whom all power is committed both in heaven and earth, will own you as the auxiliaries of His cause—by which ye may become the instruments of adding to the triumphs of the great Redeemer, and holding up His name to the world with the splendour of an augmented reputation. O think what a distinction the once crucified but now exalted Saviour has conferred upon you. He has laid the burden of His honour and of His cause upon your shoulders. He has committed to you the task of adorning His doctrine. He has ennobled your every employment, by telling you that out of them all there may arise the moral lustre of such a principle and such a quality, as will reflect a credit upon Himself. And He who has done so much to exalt the station of a servant by taking the form of one on His own person, and by rendering under it such a service to Him who sitteth on the throne, as to have purchased for a sinful world all the securities and all the hopes and all the triumphs of their redemption, comes back upon you servants, now that he is exalted to the right hand of the most High, and tells you how much he looks to you for the glories of His

interest and of His name—how much He rests upon you for the illustration and the honour of His doctrine in the world. And as it was the work of the Son of God, when veiled in the humiliation of a servant, which set on foot the great plan of the world's restoration—so is it still to the work of servants, to you my humbler brethren, the glories of whose immortal nature lie buried only for a few little years under the meanness and the drudgeries of your daily employment—it is to you that He confides the helping forward of this mighty achievement, and the maintaining of its influence and of its glory from generation to generation.

It is in His name that we address you. We tell you, ye men-servants and ye maid-servants, from the sincerity of a heart that is most thoroughly penetrated with the truth and the importance of what we are now uttering, that you can do more for Christ in your respective families than we can possibly accomplish. We know not who your masters and mistresses are. But we know that there may be masters who scowl disdainfully on the business of the priesthood. We know that with the insolence of wealth, there may be some who despise the preaching of the cross, and make holiday of our sabbaths and our sacraments. We know that there may be some who come not here to have the doctrine of God our Saviour preached to them; and therefore it is that we want you to do this business for us. You may do it in effect without the utterance of a single word on the subject of Christianity. You may do it by the living power of your example. You may do it by the impressive exhibition of a fidelity which no temptation can seduce, and no lure of gain can cause to swerve from the line of a strict and undeviating integrity. You may do it by a lesson of greater energy than all that human argument can press, or the magic of human eloquence can insinuate. You may let them see in the whole of your history, that the man among all their dependents who is most devoted to the service of the sanctuary, is also the most devoted to the service of his employer; and the most tender of all his interests; and the most observant of all his will. You may preach them a daily sermon by the daily exhibition of your faithfulness, and your attachment, and that deep and duteous spirit of loyalty, which, with all the firm footing of a religious principle in your heart, leads you to be careful of all the trust he has committed to you, and mindful of all his orders, and ever ready to meet his every wish and his every lawful imposition by the alacrity of your most assiduous and devoted ministrations. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. And even though your master should listen to the every demonstration which issues from the pulpit, he may retire day after day with a charmed ear, and an unawakened conscience, and the whole of the preacher's eloquence may die away from his memory like the sound of a pleasant song. But you keep by him through the week, and a grateful sense of your value is ever forcing itself upon his convictions. And the inference that Christianity has a something of reality in its nature, may at times intrude itself among the multitude of his other thoughts and his other avocations. And his conscience may be arrested by the interesting visitation of such an idea. And that Spirit whom we call you to pray for on his behalf, may reward your example and your supplications, by pressing the idea home, and pursuing him with its resistless influence, and opening through its power such an avenue to his heart, as may at length carry before it the whole of his desires and of his purposes. And in like manner as Christianity found its way into the household of Cæsar—so may you, my humbler brethren, find out a way for it into the houses of the wealthiest of our citizens; and be the instruments of spreading it around among all those villas of magnificence, which skirt and which adorn the city of our habitation; and to you, clothed as ye are in the habiliments of servitude, and weighed down from morning to night by its drudgeries, and veiled as the greatness of your immortal aspirations is from the eye of the world—even upon you may this blessing in all its richness be realized, that as ye have turned men unto righteousness so shall ye shine as the stars for ever and ever.

When we think of the lower orders of society, we cannot but think along with it, how high and how noble is the

Gospel estimate of that importance which belongs to them. Each of them carries in his bosom a principle of deathless energy, never to be extinguished. Each of them has a career of ambition opened up, lofty as heaven, and splendid as a crown of immortality. Each of them has an open way to Him who sitteth on the throne, through the mediation of Him who sitteth on the right hand of it. To them belongs the memorable distinction conferred by this utterance of the Eternal Son—that unto the poor the Gospel is preached. Each of them possesses a heart that may be regenerated by the influences of the Spirit; and may be filled with all that is pure and all that is elevated in piety; and may be turned into a residence for the finest and the loftiest emotions; and that, under the power of an evangelical culture, may be made to exemplify all that is respectable in worth, and all that is endearing in the nobler graces of Christianity. When worth and greatness meet in one imposing combination, there is a something in a spectacle so rare which draws the general eye of admiration along with it. But to the moral taste of some, and we profess ourselves to be of that number—there is a something still more touching, still more attractive, still more fitted to draw the eye of philanthropy, and to fill it with the images of beauty and peacefulness, in what we should call the virtues and the respectabilities of humble life—as a pious father, in the midst of a revering family—or the duteous offspring who rise around him, and are taught by his example to keep the Sabbaths of the Lord, and to love His ordinances—or the well-ordered household, the members of which are trained to all the decencies of Christian conduct—or the frail and lowly tenement, where the voice of psalms is heard with the return of every evening, and the morning of the hallowed day collects all its inmates around the altar of domestic prayer. When such pictures as these occur in humble life, and sure we are that humble life is capable of affording them, who could think of withholding from them his testimony of readiest admiration? The man who, without any superiority of wealth whatever, has, by the pure force of character, gained a moral ascendency over the population of his obscure neighbourhood, causes all earthly distinctions to vanish into insignificance before him. Now we affirm that in the very poorest and most unnoticed walks of society, such men are to be found; that by the powerful application of Christian motives such men may be multiplied; that there exist throughout the wide mass of society all the imaginable capabilities of worth and excellence, and principle and piety; that on the spacious field of a mighty harvest, which is on every side of us, there may be raised a whole multitude of converts, in whose hearts the principle of the Gospel shall have taken up its firm possession, and over the visible path of whose history the power of the Gospel may shed the lustre of some of the best and finest accomplishments by which our nature can be adorned.

We must not however pursue this speculation any farther. It is in the power of the servants, who now hear us, to turn it into a reality. We look to them for the vindication of all we have uttered; and sure we are, that a faithful and an attached servant; one who would maintain unseduced integrity, in the midst of manifold temptations; on whom the struggling force of principle would achieve a victory over the lure of every opportunity, and the certainty of every concealment; who, nobly superior to all that is sordid, and sneaking, and artful, would protect his master's interest as his own, and disdain to touch a single farthing of what was committed to him—why, we should never think of the rank of such a man—we should call him the champion of his order, and feel how honourably he had represented his own class of society—how he had asserted all their honours, and shown how elevation of soul and of sentiment belonged as essentially to them as to the wealthiest and most distinguished of the land—how he had evinced the wondrous capabilities of principle and of improvement which had existed over the wide mass of the population. And, taking him as a specimen, that the whole face of the community might be turned into a moral garden; and that, in point of moral and spiritual importance, the poor, the despised, the unnoticed, the neglected poor, are to the full equal with all that was most lofty in

the rank, and all that was most splendid in the literature of society.

We dismiss you, my friends, with the remark—that this is no speculation of ours. It is the call of the Saviour who died for you. It is He who, now that he has achieved your redemption, condescends to ask a favour of you. He commits to you the adornment of his doctrine in the eyes of the world. And remember that when you leave this church, and betake yourselves to the familiarities of your daily employment, though our eye cannot follow you, the eye of your Master in heaven is never away from you. He takes an interest in all your doings. He registers the every hour and performance of your history. If you suffer not this reflection to tell upon your conduct from this moment, you are throwing the gauntlet of defiance to a beseeching and a commanding Saviour. But if otherwise, He will not despise the humble offering of your obedience. He will put it down as done unto Him. He will recognise you as fellow-helpers to his cause and to his interest in the world. He will accept of your prayers, because they are the prayers of them whose hands are clean and whose hearts are purged from their regard to all iniquity. You will grow in friendly and familiar intercourse with the great Mediator; and He will put down the very smallest items of your obedience as fruits of the love that you bear Him, and of the faith which worketh by love and which keepeth the commandments.

SERMON XL.

The Importance of Civil Government to Society.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."—ROMANS iii. 9—19.

THERE are certain of these charges which can be brought more simply and speedily home in the way of conviction than certain others of them. Those which bring man more directly before the tribunal of God, can be made out more easily than those which bring him before the tribunal of his fellows. It were difficult to prove, that, in reference to man, there are not some of the species who have not something to glory of; but it should not be so difficult to prove, that we have nothing to glory of before God. Now, the conclusion of the Apostle's argument in this passage is, that it is before God that all the world is guilty; and if we, in the first instance, single out those verses which place man before us in his simple relationship to the God who formed him, we ought not to find it a hard matter to carry the acquiescence of our hearers in the sentence which is here pronounced upon our guilty species.

One of those verses is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." To be held as having righteously kept the law of our country, we must keep the whole of it. It is not necessary that we accumulate upon our persons the guilt of treason, and forgery, and murder, and violent depredation, ere we forfeit our lives to an outraged government. By one of these acts we incur just as dreadful and as entire a forfeiture as though guilty of them all. The hundred deeds of obedience will not efface or expiate the one of disobedience; and we have only to plead for the same justice to a divine that we render to a human administration, in order to convince every individual who now

hears us, conscious, as he must be, of one, and several, and many acts of transgression against the law of God, that there is not one of them who is righteous before him.

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," is another of these verses. We will venture to say of every man, without exception, who has not submitted himself to the great doctrine of this epistle, which is justification by faith, that there is not one principle clearly intelligible even to his own mind, on which he rests his acceptance with the God whom he has offended. He may have some obscure conception of His mercy, but he has never struck the compromise between His mercy and His justice. He has never braved the inquiry, how is it possible that a sinner can be pardoned without a dissolution of God's moral government? If he has ever taken up the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" he has never, in the prosecution of it, looked steadily in the face at the Truth and Holiness of the Godhead. He has never extricated his condition as a sinner, from the dilemma of God's conflicting attributes; or apprehended, to his own satisfaction, how it is that the dignity of Heaven's throne can be upheld, amid the approaches of the polluted, who dare the inspection of eternal purity, and offer to come nigh, on the single presumption of God's connivance at sin,—and a connivance founded too on the vague impression of God's simple, and easy, and unresisting tenderness. What becomes of all that which stamps authority upon a law, and props the majesty of a Lawgiver, is a question that they have not resolved; and that just because it is a question which they do not entertain. They are not seeking to resolve it. That matter which appertains to the very essence of a sinner's salvation, is a matter of which they have no understanding; and they do not care to understand it. They are otherwise taken up, and giving themselves no uneasiness upon the subject. They, all their lives long, are blinking, and evading the questions which lie at the very turning point of that transition by which a sinner passes from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance. They hold the whole of this matter in abeyance · and the things of the world engross, and interest, and occupy, their whole hearts, to the utter exclusion of Him who made the world. They are seeking after many things, but they are not seeking after God.—If you think that this is bearing too hard upon you, tell us what have been the times, and what the occasions, on which you have ever made the finding of God the distinct and the business object of your endeavours? When did you ever seek Him truly? When did your efforts in this way ever go beyond the spirit and the character of an empty round of observations? What are the strenuous attempts you ever made to push the barrier which intercepts the guilty from the God whom they have rebelled against? If you are really and heartily seeking, you will find; but, without the fear of refutation, do we affirm of all here present who have not reached the Saviour, and are not in their way to Him, that none of you understandeth, and none of you seeketh after God.

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good; no, not one,"—is another of these verses. We do not say of the people whom we are now addressing, that they have gone out of the way of honour, or out of the way of equity, or out of the way of fair, and pleasant, and companionable neighbourhood. But they, one and all of them, are out of the way of godliness. When the Prophet complains of our species, he does not affirm of them that they had turned every one to a way either of injustice or cruelty; but he counts it condemnation enough, that they had turned every one *to his own* way. It is iniquity enough in his eyes that the way in which we walk is our own way, and not God's; that in the prosecution of it we are simply pleasing ourselves, and not asking or caring whether it be a way that is pleasing to Him; that the impelling principle of what we do is our own will, and not His authority; that the way in which we walk is a way of independence upon God, if not of iniquity against our fellows in society; that it is the way of one who walks in the sight of his own eyes, and not of one who walks under the sight and in the service of another; that God, in fact, is as good as cast off from us;

and we say what is tantamount to this, that we will not have Him to reign over us. This is the universal habit of Nature; and if so, Nature is out of the way, and the world at large offers a monstrous exception to the habit of the sinless and unfallen, where all from the highest to the lowest, walk in that rightful subordination which the thing that is formed should ever have towards Him who formed it. It is this which renders all the works of mere natural men so unprofitable, that is, of no value in the high count and reckoning of eternity. They want the great moral infusion which makes them valuable. There is nothing of God in them; having neither His will for their principle, nor the advancement of any one cause which His heart is set upon for their object. They may serve a temporary purpose. They may shed a blessing over the scenery of our mortal existence. They may minister to the good, and the peace, and the protection of society. They may add to the sunshine or the serenity of our little day upon earth; and yet be unprofitable, because they yield no fruit unto immortality. Destitute as they all are of godliness, they are destitute of goodness. They have not the essential spirit of this attribute pervading them. And though many there are to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and who have reached a lofty estimation in the walks of integrity and honour, and even of philanthropy and patriotism, yet, with the taint of earthliness which vitiates all they do, in the estimation of Heaven's Sanctuary there is none of them that doeth good; no, not one.

We now pass onward to another set of charges, which it may be not so easy to substantiate on the ground of actual observation. They consist of highly atrocious offences against the peace and the dearest interests of society. It is true, that the apostle here drops the style of universality which he so firmly sustains in the foregoing part of his arraignment, when he speaks of all being out of the way; and of none, no, not one, being to be found on the path of godliness. And it is further true, that, in the subsequent prosecution of his charges, he quotes several expressions which David made use of, not against the whole species, but against his own enemies. But yet it will be found, that though the picture of atrocity here drawn may not in our day be so broadly exhibited as in the ruder and more barbarous periods of this world's history, yet, that the principles of it are still busily at work; and though humanity be altered a little in its guise, it is not, apart from the gospel, at all altered in its substance; that though softened down into a somewhat milder complexion, its fiercer elements are not therefore extinguished, but only lie for a time in a sort of slumbering concealment; that though law and civilization, and a more enlightened sense of interest, may have stopped the mouth of many a desolating volcano, which would else have marred and wasted the face of society, yet do the fiery materials still exist in the bosom of society. It is religion alone which will kill the elementary principles of human wickedness, and every expedient short of religion will do no more than restrain the ebullition of them. So that, dark as the scriptural representation of our nature is; and though here personified by the Apostle into a monster, whose delight is in the most foul and revolting abominations; with a throat like an open sepulchre, emitting contempt, and hatred, and envy, and every thing offensive; and a tongue practised in the arts of deceitfulness; and lips from which the gall of malignity ever drops in unceasing distillation; and a mouth full of venomous asperity; and feet that run to assassination as a game; and with the pathway on which she runs marked by the ruin and distress that attend upon her progress; and with a disdainful aversion in her heart to the safety and ingloriousness of peace; and, finally, with an aspect of defiance to the God that called her into being, and gave all her parts and all her energies—though this sketch of our nature was originally taken by the Psalmist from the prowling banditti that hovered on the confines of Judea, yet has the Apostle, by admitting it nto his argument, stamped a perpetuity upon it, and made it universal,—giving us to understand, that if such was the character of man, as it stood nakedly out among the rude and resentful hostilities of a barbarous people, such also is the real character of man among the glosses, and the regularities, and

the monotonous decencies of modern society.

There is one short illustration which may help you to comprehend this. You know that oaths were more frequent at one time than they are now in the conversation of the higher classes, and that at present it is altogether a point of politeness to abstain from the utterance of them. It is a point of politeness, we fear, more than a point of piety. There may be less of profaneness in their mouths, while there may be as much as ever in in their hearts; and when the question is between God and man, and with a view to rate the godliness of the latter, do you think that this is at all alleviated by a mere revolution of taste about the proprieties of fashionable intercourse? There may be as little of religion in the discontinuance of swearing, when that is brought about by a mere fluctuation in the mode or *bon ton* of society, as there is of religion in the adoption of a new dress, or a new style of entertainment. And, in like manner, murder in the act may be less frequent now, while, if he who hateth his brother be a murderer, it may be fully as foul and frequent in the principle; and theft, in the shape of violent and open depredation, be no longer practised by him who gives vent to an equal degree of dishonesty through the chicaneries of merchandize; and that malice which wont in other times to pour itself forth in resentful outcry, or vulgar execration, may now find its sweet and secret gratification in the conquests of a refined policy; and thus may there lurk under the soft and placid disguises of well-bred citizenship, just as much of unfeeling deceit, and unfeeling cruelty, as were ever realized in the fiercer contests of savage warfare, so as to verify the estimate of our apostle, even when applied to the character of society in modern days, and to make it as evident with the duties of the second table as it is with the first, that in every thing man has wandered far from the path of rectitude, and in every thing has fallen short of the glory of God.

The truth is, there is much in the whole guise of modern society that is fitted to hide from human eyes the real deformity of the human character. We think that, apart from Christianity, the falsehood and ferocity of our species are essentially the same with what they were in the most unsettled periods of its history—that, however moulded into a different form, they retain all the strength and substance that they ever had—and that, if certain restraints were lifted away, certain regulations which have their hold not upon the principle, but upon the selfishness of our nature: then would the latent propensities of man again break forth into open exhibition, and betray him to be the same guileful, and rapacious, and vindictive creature he has ever shown himself to be, in those places of the earth where government had not yet introduced its restraints. and civilization had not yet introduced its disguises.

And even when society has sat down into the form of a peaceful and well-ordered commonwealth, will it be seen that the evil of the human heart, though it come not forth so broadly and so outrageously as before, is just as active in its workings, and just as unsubdued in its principle as ever. We apprehend that man to be mainly ignorant of life, and to be unpractised or untaught among the collisions of human intercourse, who is not aware that even among our politest circles, smoothed as they may be into perfect decorum, and graced by the smile of soft and sentimental courtesy, there may lurk all the asperities and heart-burnings so honestly set forth by our Apostle; and that even there the artful malignity of human passion finds, in slanderous insinuations, and the devices of a keen and dexterous rivalry, its effectual vent for them. And little has he experienced of the trick and treachery of business, who thinks that, in the scramble of its eager competitions, less deceit is now used with the tongue, than in the days when the Psalmist was compassed round with the snares of his adversaries. And slightly has he reflected on the true character, that often beams out from beneath the specious fallacy which lies over it, who does not perceive that there may, even with law, be as determined a spirit of injustice, among the frauds and the forms of bankruptcy, as that which in the olden time, and without law, carried violence and rapine into a neighbour's habitation And there is a lack of insight with him who thinks, that in civilized war, with all

its gallant courtesies, and all its manifestos of humane and righteous protestation, there may not be the same kindling for the fray, and the same appetite for blood, that gives its fell and revengeful sweep to the tomahawk of Indians. There is another dress and another exterior upon society than before; but be assured, that in so far as it respects the essentials of human character, the representation of the Apostle is still the true one. Whatever were the deceitful, or whatever were the murderous propensities of man, three thousand years ago, they have descended to our present generation; and we are not sure but that, through the regular vents of war, and of bankruptcy, there is as full scope for their indulgence as ever. There may be a change in the mode of these iniquities, without any change at all in the matter of them; and after all that police, and refinement, and the kindly operation of long pacific intercourse, have done to humanize the aspect of these latter days, we are far from sure whether upon the displacement of certain guards and barriers of security, the slumbering ferocities of man might not again announce their existence, and break out, as before, into open and declared violence.

All this, while it gives a most humiliating estimate of our species, should serve to enhance to our minds the blessings of regular Government. And it were curious to question the agents of police upon this subject, the men who are stationed at the place of combat and of guardianship, with those who have cast off the fear of God, and cast off also the fear of man to such a degree, as to be ever venturing across the margin of human legality. Let the most observant of all these public functionaries simply depone to the effect it would have, even upon our mild and modern society, were this guardianship dissolved. Would it not be evident to him, and is it not equally evident to you all, that the artificial gloss which now overspreads the face of it would speedily be dissipated; and that, underneath, would the character of man be sure to stand out in far nearer resemblance to that sketch, however repulsive, which the inspired writer has here offered of our species? Were anarchy the order of our day, and the lawless propensities of man permitted to stalk abroad in this the season of their wild emancipation; were all the restraints of order driven in, and human strength and human fierceness were to ride in triumph over the prostrate authorities of the land; were the reigning will of our country, at this moment, the will of a spontaneous multitude, doing every man of them, in rude and random ebullitions, what was right in his own eyes; with just such a fear of our heavenly superior as now exists in the world, but with all fear and reverence for earthly superiors taken away from it; let us just ask you to conceive the effect of such a state of things, and then to compute how little there is of moral, and how much there is of mere animal restraint in the apparent virtues of human society. There is a twofold benefit in such a contemplation. It will enhance to every Christian mind the cause of loyalty, and lead him to regard the power that is, as the minister of God to him for good. And it will also guide him through many delusions to appreciate justly the character of man; to distinguish aright between the semblance of principle and its reality; and to gather, from the surveys of experience, a fresh evidence for the truth of those Scriptures, which speak so truly of human sinfulness, and point out so clearly the way of human salvation.

But it is not necessary, for the purpose of identifying the character of man, as it now is, with what the character of man was, in its worst features, in the days of the Royal Psalmist, to make out by evidence a positive thirst after blood on the part of any existing class in society. We are not sure that it was any native or abstract delight in cruelty which prompted the marauders of other days to deeds of violence. Place a man in circumstances of ease and of self-complacency, and he will revolt from the infliction of unnecessary pain, just as the gorged and satiated animal of prey will suffer the traveller to pass without molestation. It forms no part of our indictment against the species, that his appetite for blood urges him onwards to barbarity, but that his appetite for other things will urge him on to it; and that if, while he had these things, he would rather abstain from the death of his fellow-men, yet, rather than want these things, he would inflict it. It is not that his love of cruelty is the originating

appetite which carries him forward to deeds of cruelty, but that his abhorrence of cruelty is not enough to arrest the force of other appetites, when they find that human life lies in the way of their gratification. The feet of the borderers of Judea made haste to shed blood; but, just because, like the borderers of our own land, their love of booty could only be indulged with human resistance among human habitations. And were these days of public licentiousness again to return—were the functions of government suspended, and the only guarantee of peace and of property were the native rectitude of the species—did the power of anarchy achieve its own darling object of a jubilee all over the country for human wilfulness; and in this way were, not the past inclinations revived, but just the present inclinations of man let loose upon society—a single month would not elapse, ere scenes of as dread atrocity were witnessed, as those which the Psalmist has recorded, and those which the Apostle has transmitted, as the exemplars, not of practical, but of general humanity. The latent iniquities of the human heart would reappear just as soon as the compression of human authority was lifted away from them; and these streets be made to flow with the blood of the most distinguished of our citizens; and the violence at first directed against the summit of society, would speedily cause the whole frame of it to totter into dissolution; and in this our moral and enlightened day it would be found, that there was enough of crime in the country to spread terror over all its provinces, and to hold its prostrate families in bondage; and with such a dreary interregnum of tumlt, and uproar, and vagrancy, as this, would there be a page of British history as deeply crimsoned over, as are the darkest annals of the barbarity of our species—all proving, how indispensable the ordinance of human government is to the well-being of society; but also proving, that if it be the will, and the inward tendency, and the unfettered principle, which constitute the real elements of the character of man, this character has only been coloured into another hue, without being transformed into another essence, by an ordinance which can only keep its elements in check, but never can extinguish them.

And on applying the spiritual touchstone of the gospel, may we perhaps fasten a similar charge on many in society, who never suspected it possible that they had any part in the Apostle's dark representation of our foul and fallen nature. Even in the wildest scenes of anarchy, it may not be the love of cruelty, but the love of power or of plunder, which leads men to the most revolting abominations of cruelty. It is not so much a ravenous desire after human blood, as a regardlessness about it, which stamps a savage barbarity on the characters of men. It is their regard for the objects of avarice and ambition, coupled with their regardlessness about the quantity of human life, that lies in the way of them; which is enough to account for deeds of atrocity as monstrous as ever were committed, either by bloody tyrants, or ferocious multitudes. Now, may not this regard on the one hand, and this regardlessness on the other, be fully exemplified by him who looks with delight on the splendid reversion that awaits him, and cares not how soon the death of his aged relative may bring it to his door? And may it not be exemplified by him who, all in a tumult with military glee, and the visions of military glory, longs for some arena crowded with the fellows of his own sentient nature, on which he might bring the fell implements of destruction to bear, and so signalize himself in the proud lists of chivalry or patriotism? And most striking of all perhaps, may it not be exemplified, by the most gentle and pacific of our citizens, who, engrossed with the single appetite of fear, and under the movements of no other regard than a regard to his own security, might listen with secret satisfaction to the tale of the many hundreds of the rebellious who had fallen—and how the sweep of fatal artillery, or the charge of victorious squadrons, told with deadly execution on the flying multitude? We are not comparing the merits of the cause of order, which are all triumphant with those of anarchy; the inscribed ensigns of which are as hateful to every Christian eye, as ever to the Jews of old was the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. We are merely expounding the generalities of a nature, trenched upon every side of it in

deceitfulness; and where, under the gloss of many plausibilities, there lurk, unsuspected, and unknown, all the rudiments of depravity: and through the intricacies of which, he who saw with the eye of inspiration could detect a permanent and universal taint, both of selfishness and of practical atheism. The picture that he has drawn will bear to be confronted with the humanity of modern as well as of ancient days; and, though taken off at first from the ruder specimens of our kind, yet, on a narrow inspection, will it be found to be substantiated among the delicate phases of our more elegant and artificial society; so as that every mouth should be stopped, and the whole world be brought in guilty before God.

In looking to the present aspect of society, it is not easy so to manage our argument as to reach conviction among all, that all are guilty before God; and that, unknowing of it themselves, there may be the lurking principles of what is dire in human atrocity, even under the blandest exhibitions of our familiar and every-day acquaintanceship. But, as there are degrees of guilt, and as these are more or less evident to human eyes, it would, perhaps, decide the identity of our present generation, with those of a rude and savage antiquity, could we run along the scale of actual wickedness that is before us, and fasten upon an exemplification of it so plainly and obviously detestable as to vie with all that is recorded of the villany of our species in former ages of the world. And such a one has occurred so recently, that there is not one here present who, upon the slightest allusion, will not instantly recognise it. We speak not of those who have openly spoken, and that beyond the margin of legality, against the government of our land. We speak not of those who have clamoured so loudly, and lifted so open a front of hostility to the laws, as to have brought down upon them the hand of public vengeance. We speak not even of those who, steeled to the purposes of blood went forth to kill and to destroy, and, found with the implements of violence in their hands, are now awaiting the sentence of an earthly tribunal on the enormity into which they have fallen. But we speak to our men of deeper contrivance; to those wary and unseen counsellors who have so coolly conducted others to the brunt of a full exposure, and then retired so cautiously within the shelter of their own cowardice; those men of print and of plot, and of privacy, in whose hands the other agents of rebellion were nothing better than slaves and simpletons; those men of skill enough for themselves, to go thus far, and no farther, and of cruelty enough for others, as to care not how many they impelled across the verge of desperation; those men who have made their own harvest of the passions of the multitude, and now skulk in their hiding places, till the storm of vengeance that is to sweep the victims of their treachery from the land of the living shall have finally blown away; those men who spoke a patriotism which they never felt, and shed their serpent tears over sufferings which never drew from their bosoms one sigh of honest tenderness. Tell us, if out of the men who thus have trafficked in delusion, and, in pursuance of their unfeeling experiment, have entailed want and widowhood upon families, there may not as dark a picture of humanity be drawn as the Psalmist drew out of the rude materials that were around him: And, after all that civilization has done for our species, and all that smoothness of external aspect into which government has moulded the form of society; is it not evident, that upon the slightest relaxation of its authority, and the faintest prospect of its dissolution and overthrow, there is lying in reserve as much of untamed and ruthless ferocity in our land, as, if permitted to come forth, would lift an arm of bloody violence, and scatter all the cruelties of the reign of terror among its habitations?*

These are rather lengthened illustrations in which we have indulged; but who can resist the temptation that offers itself, when an opening is given for exhibiting the accordancy that obtains between the truth of observation, and the averments of scripture; when facts are before us, and such a use of them can be made, as that of turning them into ma-

* This Sermon was preached in 1820, after the suppression of a rebellious movement in Scotland.

terials by which to strengthen the foundations of orthodoxy; and when, out of scenes which rise with all the freshness of recency before us, it can be shown how the sturdy apostolic doctrine will bear to be confronted with every new display, and every new development of human experience? And, ere we have done, we should like to urge three lessons upon you, from all that has been said; the first with a view to set your theology upon its right basis; and the second with a view to set your loyalty upon its right basis; and the third with a view to impress a right practical movement on those who hold a natural or political ascendancy in our land.

I. First, then, as to the theology of this question. We trust you perceive how much it is, and how little it is, that can be gathered from the comparative peace and gentleness of modern society; how much the protection of families is due to the physical restraints that are laid on by this world's government, and how little is due to the moral restraints that are laid on by the unseen government of Heaven; how little the existing safety of our commonwealth, both from crime and turbulence, is owing to the force of any considerations which are addressed to the principle of man, and how much of it is owing to the force of such considerations as are addressed to man's fears and man's selfishness;—all proving, that if human nature, in this our age, do not break forth so frequently and so outrageously into violence as in other ages that have gone by, it is only because it is shackled, and not because it is tamed. It is more like the tractableness of an animal led about by a chain than of an animal inwardly softened into a docility and a mildness which did not formerly belong to it. It is due, without doubt, to the influence of a very strong and very salutary counteraction; but it is a counteraction that has been formed out of the interest of man, and not out of the fear of God. It is due, not to the working of that celestial machinery which bears on the spiritual part of our constitution, but to the working of another machinery most useful for the temporary purpose which it serves, yet only bearing on the material and worldly part of our constitution. On this point, observation and orthodoxy are at one; and one of the most convincing illustrations which the Apostle can derive to his own doctrine, may be taken from the testimony of those who, in the shape of legal functionaries, are ranged along that line of defence, over which humanity, with its numerous outbreakings of fraud, and rapacity, and violence, is ever passing. Let them simply aver, on their own experimental feeling, what the result would be, if all the earthly safeguards of law and of government were driven away from the rampart at which they are stationed; and they are just preaching orthodoxy to our ears, and lending us their authority to one of its articles, when they tell us, that upon such an event the whole system of social life would go into unhingement, and that, in the wild uproar of human passions which would follow, kindness, and confidence, and equity, would take their rapid flight from human habitations.

II. But, secondly, the very same train of argument which goes to enlighten the theology of this subject, serves also to deepen and to establish within us all the principles of a most devoted loyalty. That view of the human character, upon which it is contended, by the divine, that unless it is regenerated there can be no meetness for heaven, is the very same with that view of the human character upon which it is contended, by the politician, that unless it is restrained there will be no safety from crime and violence along the course of the pilgrimage which leads to it. An enlightened pilgrim recognises the hand of God in all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the natural elements; and he equally recognises in it all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the moral elements by which he is surrounded. Had he a more favourable view of our nature, he might not look on government as so indispensable; but, with the view that he actually has, he cannot miss the conclusion of its being the ordinance of Heaven for the church's good upon earth; and that thus a canopy of defence is drawn over the heads of Zion's travellers; and they rejoice in the authority of human laws as an instrument in the hand of God for the peace of their Sabbaths, and the peace of their sacraments; and they deprecate the anarchy that would

ensue from the suspension of them, with as much honest principle, as they would deprecate the earthquake that might ingulf, or the hurricane that might sweep away their habitations; and, aware of what humanity is, when left to itself, they accept, as a boon from heaven, the mechanism which checks the effervescence of all those fires that would else go forth to burn up and to destroy.

This, at all times the feeling of every enlightened Christian, must have been eminently and peculiarly so at that time when our recent alarms were at the greatest height. It was the time of our sacrament; and, to all who love its services, must it have been matter of grateful rejoicing, that, by the favour of Him who sways the elements of Nature, and the as uncontrollable elements of human society, we were permitted to finish these services in peace; that, in that feast of love and good-will, we were not rudely assailed by the din of warlike preparation; that, ere sabbath came, the tempest alarm, which had sounded so fearfully along the streets of our city, was hushed into the quietness of sabbath; so that, like as if in the midst of sweetest landscape, and amongst a congregation gathered out of still and solitary hamlets, and with nothing to break in upon the deep repose and tranquillity of the scene, save the voice of united praise from an assembly of devout and revering worshippers, were we, under the protection of an arm stronger than any arm of flesh, and at the bidding of a voice more powerful than that of mighty conquerors suffered to enjoy the pure and peaceful ordinances of our faith, with all the threats and all the outcries of human violence kept far away from us.

It was the apprehension of many, that it might have been otherwise. And, what ought to be their enduring gratitude, when, instead of the wrath of man let loose upon our families; and a devoted city given up to the frenzy and the fierceness of a misguided population; and the maddening outcry of combatants plying against each other their instruments of destruction; and the speed of flying multitudes, when the noise of the footmen and the noise of the horsemen gave dreadful intimation of the coming slaughter; and the bursting conflagration, in various quarters, marking out where the fell emissaries of ruin were at work; and the shock, and the volley, and the agonies of dying men, telling the trembling inmates of every household, that the work of desperation had now begun upon the streets, and might speedily force its way into all the dwelling-places:—this is what that God, who has the elements of the moral world at command, might have visited on a town which has witnessed so many a guilty sabbath, and harbours within its limits the ungodliness of so many profane and alienated families—In what preciousness, then, ought that sabbath to be held; and what a boon from the kindness of long-suffering Heaven should we regard its quietness; when, instead of such deeds of vengeance between townsmen and their fellows, they walked together in peaceful society to the house of prayer, and sat in peacefulness together at its best loved ordinance.

The men who prize the value of this protection the most, are the men who feel most the need of human government, and who most revere it as an ordinance of God. Such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless it be renewed by divine grace, there can be no translation into a blessed eternity; and such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless its native inclinations be repressed by human government, there can be no calm or protected passage along the track of conveyance in this world. Their loyalty emerges from their orthodoxy. With them it has all the tenacity of principle; and is far too deeply seated to be laid prostrate among the fierce and guilty agitations of the tumultuous. They have no part in the rancour of the disaffected; and they have no part in the ambitiousness of the dark and daring revolutionist; and seeking, as they do, to lead a quiet and a peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, a season of turbulence is to them a season of trial, and would be a season of difficulty, had they not the politics of the Bible to guide their way among the threats and the terrors of surrounding desperadoes. "Honour the king, and meddle not with those who are given to change," are the indelible duties of a record that is indelible; and they stamp a sacredness upon Christian loyalty. They are not at liberty to cancel what God has

enacted, and to expunge what God has written. They are loyal because they are religious; to suffer in such a cause is persecution, to die in it is martyrdom.

There is a mischievous delusion on this subject. In the minds of many, and these too men of the first influence and station in the country, there is a haunting association which still continues to mislead them, even in the face of all evidence, and of all honest and credible protestation; and in virtue of which they, to this very hour, conceive that such a religion as they call methodism, is the invariable companion of a plotting, artful, and restless democracy. This is truly unfortunate; for the thing called methodism is neither more nor less than Christianity in earnest; and yet they who so call it, have it most honestly at heart to promote the great object of a peaceful, and virtuous, and well-conditioned society; and not therefore their disposition, which is right, but their apprehension upon this topic which is egregiously wrong, has just had the effect of bending the whole line of their patronage and policy the wrong way. And thus are they unceasingly employed in attempting to kill, as a noxious plant, the only element which can make head against the tide of irreligion and blasphemy in our land; conceiving, but most woefully wide of the truth in so conceiving, that there is a certain approving sympathy between the sanctity of the evangelical system, and the sedition that so lately has derided and profaned it. The doctrinal Christianity of this very epistle would be called methodistical by those to whom we are now alluding; but sure we are, that the disciple who goes along with Paul, while he travels in argument through the deeper mysteries of faith, will not abandon him when, in the latter chapters of his work, he breaks forth into that efflorescence of beautiful and perfect morality with which he winds up the whole of his wondrous demonstration; but will observe the bidden conduct as a genuine emanation of the expounded creed—when told, that every soul should be subject unto the higher powers, and that there is no power but of God, and that the powers which be are ordained of God. And whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

III. We venture to affirm, that it is just the want of this Christianity in earnest which has brought our nation to the brink of an emergency so fearful as that upon which we are standing. When Solomon says, that it is righteousness which exalteth a nation, he means something of a deeper and more sacred character than the mere righteousness of society. This last may be learned in the school of classical or of civil virtue; and an argument may be gathered in its behalf even from the views of an enlightened selfishness; and, all lovely as it is in exhibition, may it draw from the tasteful admirers of what is fine in character even something more than a mere nominal acknowledgment. It may carry a certain extent of practical conformity over the real and living habits of those who, faultless in honour, and uprightness, and loyalty, are nevertheless devoid of the religious principle altogether; and who, so far from being tainted with methodism, in the sense of that definition which we have already given of it, would both repudiate its advances upon their own family, and regret any visible inroads it might make on our general population.

That Solomon does mean something more than the virtues to which we are now alluding, is evident we think from this circumstance. The term righteousness, admits of a social and relative application, and in this application, may introduce a conception into the mind that is exclusive of God. But the same cannot be said of the term sin. This generally suggests the idea of God as the Being sinned against. The one term does not so essentially express the idea of conformity to the divine law, as the other term expresses the idea of transgression against it. It does not carry up the mind so immediately to God; because, with the utter absence of Him from our thoughts, may it still retain a substance and a significancy, as expressive of what is held to be right in a community of human beings. It is well, then, that the clause, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," is followed up by the clause, "But sin is a reproach to any people;" and

that thus the latter term, which is equivalent to ungodliness by the contrast in which it stands with the former term, leads us to the true import of the first of these two clauses, and gives us to understand Solomon as saying, that it is godliness that exalteth a nation.

Cut away the substratum of godliness, and how, we ask, will the secondary and the earth-born righteousness be found to thrive on the remaining soil which nature supplies for rearing it? It is an error to think that it will make a total withdrawment of itself from the world. It will still be found, in straggling specimens, among some sheltered and congenial spots even of this world's territory—at times among the haunts of lettered enthusiasm; and at times on the elevated stage of rank which stands forth to public notice, or of an opulence which is raised above the attacks of care and of temptation; and, at times, on the rarely-occurring mould of a native equity, when, in middle and comfortable life, the rude urgencies of want and of vulgar ambition do not overbear it. Even there it will grow but sparingly, without the influences of the gospel; as it did in those ages, and as it still does in those countries where the gospel is unknown. But, if you step down from those moral eminences, or if you come out from those few sweet and kindred retirements, where the moral verdure has stood, unblighted, even in the absence of Christianity, and thence go forth among the ample spaces, and the wide, and open, and general exposures of society; if, on the arena of common life, you enter the teeming families of the poor, and hold converse with the mighty host who scarcely know an interval between waking hours of drudgery and hours of sleeping unconsciousness; if, passing away from the abodes of refinement, you mingle with the many whose feelings and whose faculties are alike buffeted in the din and the dizzying of incessant labour—we mean to affix no stigma on the humbler brethren of our nature; but we may at least be suffered to say, that among the richest of fortune and accomplishment in our land, we know not the individual whose virtues, if transplanted into the unkindlier region of poverty, would have withstood the operation of all the adverse elements to which it is exposed,—unless upheld by that very godliness which he perhaps disowns, that very methodism on which perhaps he pours the cruelty of his derision.

And here it may be remarked, how much the taste of many among the higher orders of society, is at war with the best security that can be devised for the peace and well-being of society. There are many among them who admire the blossoms of virtue, while they dislike that only culture which can spread this lovely efflorescence over the whole field of humanity. They advert not to this—that the virtue which is cradled in the lap of abundance, and is blown into luxuriance among the complacencies of a heart at ease, would soon evince its frailty were it carried out among the exposures of an every-day world; that there it would droop and perish under the uncongenial influences which, apart from religion, would positively wither up all the honesties and delicacies of humble life; and therefore, that if they nauseate that gospel, which ever meets with its best acceptance, and works its most congenial effects upon the poor, they abandon the poor to that very depravity into which they themselves, had they been placed among the same temptations and besetting urgencies, would assuredly have fallen. The force of native integrity may do still what it did in the days of Pagan antiquity, when it reared its occasional specimens of worth and patriotism; but it is the power of godliness, and that alone, which will reclaim our population in the length and breadth of it, and shed a moral bloom, and a moral fragrance, over the wide expanse of society. But with many, and these too the holders of a great and ascendant influence in our land, godliness is puritanism, and orthodoxy is repulsive moroseness, and the pure doctrine of the Apostles is fanatical and disgusting vulgarity; and thus is it a possible thing that in their hands the alone aliment of public virtue may be withheld, or turned into poison. Little are they aware of the fearful reaction which may await their natural enmity to the truth as it is in Jesus; and greviously have they been misled from the sound path, even of politica wisdom, in the suspicion and intoleranc wherewith they have regarded the dispensers of the word of life among th

multitude. The patent way to disarm Nature of her ferocities, is to Christianize her; and we should look on all our alarms with thankfulness, as so many salutary indications, did they lead either to multiply the religious edifices, or to guide the religious patronage of our land.

But, again, it is not merely the taste of the higher orders which may be at war with the best interests of our country. It is also their example; not their example of dishonesty, not their example of disloyalty, not their example of fierce and tumultuous violence, but an example of that which, however unaccompanied with any one of these crimes in their own person, multiplies them all upon the person of the imitators—we mean the example of their irreligion. A bare example of integrity on the part of a rich man, who is freed from all temptations to the opposite, is not an effective example with a poor man, who is urgently beset at all hands with these temptations. It is thus that the most pure and honourable example which can shine upon the poor from the upper walks of society, of what we have called the secondary and the earth-born righteousness, will never counterwork the mischief which emanates from the example that is there held forth of ungodliness.

It is the poor man's sabbath which is the source of his week-day virtues. The rich may have other sources; but take away the sabbath from the poor, and you inflict a general desecration of character upon them. Taste, and Honour, and a native love of Truth, may be sufficient guarantees to the performance of duties so the breaking of which there is no temptation. But they are not enough for the wear and exposure of ordinary life. They make a feeble defence against such temptations as assail and agitate the men who, on the rack of their energies are struggling for subsistence. With them the relative obligations hold more singly upon the religious; and if the tie of religion, therefore, be cut asunder, the whole of their morality will forthwith go into unhingement. Whatever virtue there is on the humbler levels of society, it holds direct of the sabbath and of the sanctuary; and when these cease to be venerable, the poor cease to be virtuous. You take away all their worth, when you take away the fear of God from before their eyes; and why then should we wonder at the result of a very general depravation among them, if before their eyes there should be held forth, on the part of their earthly superiors, an utter fearlessness of God? The humbler, it ought not to be expected, will follow the higher classes on the ground of social virtue; for they have other and severer difficulties to combat, and other temptations, over which the victory would be greatly more arduous. But the humbler will follow the higher on the ground of irreligion. Only they will do it in their own style, and, perhaps, with the more daring and lawless spirit of those who riot in the excesses of a newly felt liberty. Should the merchant, to lighten the pressure of work in his counting-house, make over the arrears of his week-day correspondence to the snug and secret opportunity of the coming sabbath;—the hard wrought labourer just follows up this example in his own way, when, not to lighten, but to solace the fatigue of the six days that are past, he spends the seventh in some haunt of low dissipation. Should the man of capital, make his regular escape from the dull Sunday, and the still duller sermon, by a rural excursion, with his party of choice spirits, to the villa of weekly retreat, which by his wealth he has purchased and adorned—let it not be wondered at, that the man of drudgery is so often seen, with his band of associates, among the suburb fields and pathways of our city; or that the day which God hath commanded to be set apart for himself, should be set apart by so vast a multitude, who pour forth upon our outskirts, to the riot and extravagance of holiday. Should it be held indispensable for the accommodation of our higher citizens, that the great central lounge of politics, and periodicals, and news, be opened on sabbath to receive them; then, though the door of public entry is closed, and with the help of screens, and hangings, and partial shutters, something like an homage is rendered to public decency, and the private approach is cunningly provided, and all the symptoms of sneaking and conscious impropriety are spread over the face of this guilty indulgence—let us not wonder, though the strength of example has forced its way through the

impotency of all these wretched barriers, and that the reading-rooms of sedition and infidelity are now open every sabbath, for the behoof of our general population. Should the high-bred city gentleman hold it foul scorn to have the raillery of the pulpit thus let loose upon his habits, or that any person who fills it should so presume to tread upon his privileges—let us no longer wonder, if this very language, and uttered, too, in this very spirit, be re-echoed by the sour and sturdy Radical, who, equal to his superior in the principle of ungodliness, only outpeers him in his expressions of contempt for the priesthood, and of impetuous defiance to all that wears the stamp of authority in the land. It is thus that the impiety of our upper classes now glares upon us from the people, with a still darker reflection of impiety back again; and that, in the general mind of our country, there is a suppressed but brooding storm, the first elements of which were injected by the men who now tremble the most under the dread of its coming violence.

It is the decay of vital godliness amongst us, that has brought on this great moral distemper. It is irreligion which palpably lies at the bottom of it. Could it only have confined its influences among the sons of wealth or of lettered infidelity, society might have been safe. But this was impossible; and now that it has broke forth on the wide and populous domain of humanity, it is seen that, while a slender and sentimental righteousness might have sufficed, at least, for this present world, and among those whom fortune has shielded from its adversities, it is only by that righteousness which is propped on the basis of piety, that the great mass of a nation's virtue can be upholden.

There is something in the histories of these London executions that is truly dismal.* It is like getting a glimpse into Pandæmonium; nor do we believe that, in the annals of human depravity, did ever stout hearted sinners betray more fierce and unfeeling hardihood. It is not that part of the exhibition which is merely revolting to sensitive nature that we are now alluding to. It is not the struggle, and the death, and the shrouded operator, and the bloody heads that were carried around the scaffold, and the headless bodies of men who but one hour before, lifted their proud defiance to the God in whose presence the whole decision of their spirits must by this time have melted away. It is the moral part of the exhibition that is so appalling. It is the firm desperado step with which they ascended to the place of execution. It is the undaunted scowl which they cast on the dread apparatus before them. It is the frenzied and bacchanalian levity with which they bore up their courage to the last, and earned, in return, the applause of thousands as fierce and as frenzied as themselves. It is the unquelled daring of the man who laughed, and who sung, and who cheered the multitude, ere he took his leap into eternity, and was cheered by the multitude, rending the air with approbation back again. These are the doings of infidelity. These are the genuine exhibitions of the popular mind, after that Religion has abandoned it. It is neither a system of unchristian morals, nor the meagre Christianity of those who deride, as methodistical, all the peculiarities of our Faith, that will recall our neglected population. There is not one other expedient by which you will recover the olden character of England, but by going forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ among its people. Nothing will subdue them but that regenerating power which goes along with the faith of the New Testament. And nothing will charm away the alienation of their spirits but their belief in the overtures of redeeming mercy.

But we may expatiate too long; and let us therefore hasten to a close, with a few brief and categorical announcements, which we shall simply leave with you as materials for your own consideration.

First, though social virtue, and loyalty which is one of its essential ingredients may exist in the upper walks of life apart from godliness—yet godliness, in the hearts of those who have the brunt of all the common and popular temptations to stand against, is the main and effective hold that we have upon them for securing the righteousness of their lives.

* Executions of men who had conspired for the murder of the Ministers of State.

Secondly, the despisers of godliness are the enemies of the true interest of our nation; and it is possible that, under the name of Methodism, that very instrument may be put away which can alone recall the departing virtues of our land.

Thirdly, where godliness exists, loyalty exists; and no plausible delusion—no fire of their own kindling, lighted at the torch of false or spurious patriotism, will ever eclipse the light of this plain authoritative scripture—"Honor the King, and meddle not with those who are given to change."

But, again, such is the power of Christianity, that, even though partially introduced in the whole extent of its saving and converting influences, it may work a general effect on the civil and secular virtues of a given neighbourhood. It is thus that Christianity may only work the salvation of a few, while it raises the standard of morality among many. The reflex influence of one sacred character upon the vicinity of his residence may soften, and purify, and overawe many others, even where it does not spiritualize them. This is encouragement to begin with. It lets us perceive that, even before a great spiritual achievement has been finished, a kind of derived and moral influence may have widely and visibly spread among the population. It is thus that Christians are the salt of the earth; and we know not how few they are that may preserve society at large from falling into dissolution. It is because there are so very few among us, that our nation stands on the brink of so fearful an emergency. Were there fewer, our circumstances would be still more fearful; and if, instead of this, there were a few more, the national virtue may reattain all the lustre it ever had, even while a small fraction of our people are spiritual men. It is in this way, that we would defend those who so sanguinely count on the power of Christianity, from the imputation of being at all romantic in their hopes or undertakings. It may take ages ere their ultimate object, which is to generalize the spirit and character of the millennium in our world, be accomplished. But if there were just a tendency to go forth among our people on the errand of Christianizing them, and that tendency were not thwarted by the enmity and intolerance of those who revile, and discourage, and set at nought all the activities of religious zeal, we should not be surprised though, in a few years, a resurrection were witnessed amongst us of all the virtues that establish and that exalt a nation.

But, lastly, alarming as the aspect of the times is, and deeply tainted and imbued as the minds of many are with infidelity; and widely spread as the habit has become of alienation from all the ordinances of religion; and sullen as the contempt may be, wherewith the hardy blasphemer of Christianity would hearken to its lessons, and eye its ministers, yet even he could not so withstand the honest and persevering good-will of one on whom there stood, visibly announced, the single-hearted benevolence of the gospel, as either to refuse him a tribute of kindliness, when he met him on the street, or as to reject, with incivility and disdain, the advances he made upon his own family. Even though he should sternly refuse to lend himself to any of the processes of a moral and spiritual operator, yet it is a fact experimentally known, that he will not refuse to lend his children. The very man who, unpitying of himself, danced and sung on the borders of that abyss which was to ingulf him in a lake of vengeance for ever, even he had about him a part of surviving tenderness, and he could positively weep when he thought of his family. He who, had he met a minister of state would have murdered him, had he met the sabbath-school teacher who ventured across his threshold, and simply requested the attendance of his children, might have tried to bear a harsh and repulsive front against him, but would have found it to be impossible. Here is a feeling which even the irreligion of the times has not obliterated, and it has left, as it were, an open door of access, through which we might at length find our way to the landing-place of a purer and better generation. We hear much of the olden time, when each parent presided over the religion of his own family, and acted, every sabbath evening, the patriarch of Christian wisdom among the inmates of his own dwelling-place. How is it that this beautiful picture is again to be realized? Is it by persuasives, however forcible, addressed

to those who never listen to them? Is it by the well-told regrets of a mere indolent sentimentalism? Is it by lifting up a voice, that will die in distance away, long ere it reach that mighty population who lie so remote from all our churches, and from all our ordinances? Are we to be interdicted from bending the twig with a strength which we do have, because others require of us to bend the impracticable tree, with a strength which we do not have? The question is a practical one, and should be met experimentally;—how is the olden time to be brought back again? Is it by merely looking back upon it with an eye of tasteful contemplation; or, is it by letting matters alone; or, is it by breathing indignation and despite against all the efforts of religious philanthropy; or, is it by disdainful obloquy against those who do something, on the part of those that do nothing? Who, in a future generation, will be the likeliest parents for setting up the old system? the children who now run neglected through the streets, or those who, snatched from sabbath profanation, receive a weekly training among the decencies and the docilities of a religious school? It is not the experimental truth upon this question, that the amount of family religion is lessened, under such an arrangement, in those houses where it had a previous existence; but that, instead of this, it is often established in houses where it was before unknown. It is true, that unless a sabbath-school apparatus be animated by the Spirit of God, it will not bear with effect on the morals of the rising generation; but still it is by the frame-work of some apparatus or other that the Spirit works: and we deem that the likeliest and the best devised for the present circumstances of our country, which can secure, and that immediately, the most abundant strength of application on tender and susceptible childhood.*

In conclusion, we may advert to a certain class of society, now happily on the decline, who are fearful of enlightening the poor; and would rather that every thing was suffered to remain in the quiescence of its present condition; and though the Bible may be called the key to the kingdom of Heaven, yet, associating, as they do, the turbulence of the people with the supposed ascent that they have made in the scale of information, would not care so to depress them beneath the level of their present scanty literature, as virtually to deny them the use and the possession of the Oracles of God. Such is the unfeeling policy of those who would thus smother all the capabilities of humble life, and lay an interdict on the cultivation of human souls, and barter away the eternity of the lower orders, for the temporal safety and protection of the higher, and, in the false imagination, that to sow knowledge is to sow sedition in the land, look suspiciously and hardly on any attempt thus to educate the inferior classes of society. It is well that these bugbears are rapidly losing their influ-

* Had not the Sermon been extended to so great a length, its Author might have entered a little more into detail on the operation and advantage of the sabbath-school system; an omission, however, which he less regrets, as, in the work of supplying it, he would have done little more than repeated what he has published on the subject, in a more express form.

The same remark applies to the cursory allusion that he has made on that melancholy topic, the lack of city churches, and the unwieldy extent of city parishes; he having, elsewhere, both delivered the arithmetical statements upon this topic and also ventured to suggest the gradual remedy that might be provided for the restoration of church-going habits among the people of our great towns.

He takes the opportunity which this Note affords him, of referring the attention of his readers to a truly Christian charge, drawn up by the Methodist body in November 1819, on the subject of the political discontents which then agitated the country. It was circulated, he understands, among the members and ministers of that connexion, and ought for ever to dissolve the imagination of any alliance between the spirit of methodism, and the spirit of a factious or disaffected turbulence.

He would further observe, that the mighty influence of a sabbath on the general moral and religious character of the people, may serve to vindicate the zeal of a former generation about this one observance; a zeal which is regarded by many as altogether misplaced and puritanical. Without entering into the question, whether the Law of the Country should interfere to shield this day from outward and visible profanation, it may at least be affirmed, that the opinion of those who rate the alternations of Christianity in a land, by the fluctuating regards which, from one age to another, are rendered to the Christian Sabbath, is deeply founded on the true philosophy of our nature.

ence—and we know not how far this is due to our late venerable monarch, who, acting like a father for the good of his people, certainly did much to rebuke this cruel and unfeeling policy away from his empire. His saying, that he hoped to see the time, when there should not be a poor child in his dominions who was not taught to read the Bible, deserves to be enshrined among the best and the wisest of all the memorabilia of other days. It needs only the Saxon antiquity of Alfred, to give it a higher place than is given to all that is recorded even of his wisdom. We trust that it will be embodied in the remembrance of our nation, and be handed down as a most precious English tradition, for guiding the practice of English families; and that, viewed as the memorial of a Patriot King, it will supplant the old association that obtained between knowledge and rebellion, and raise a new association in its place, between the cause of education and the cause of loyalty. Be assured, that it is not because the people know too much, that they ever become the willing subjects of any factious or unprincipled demagogue—it is just because they know too little. It is just because ignorance is the field on which the quackery of a political impostor ever reaps its most abundant harvest. It is this which arms him with all his superiority; and the way eventually to protect society from the fermentation of such agitators, is to scatter throughout the mass as much knowledge and information as will equalize the people to the men who bear them no other regard, than as the instruments of uproar and overthrow. No coercion can so keep down the cause of scholarship, as that there shall not be a sufficient number, both of educated and unprincipled men, to plot the disturbance and overthrow of all the order that exists in society. You cannot depress these to the level of popular ignorance, in a country where schools have not been universally instituted. You cannot unscholar demagogues down to the level of an untaught multitude; and the only remaining alternative is, to scholar the multitude up to the level of demagogues. Let Scotland,* even in spite of the exhibition that she has recently made, be compared with the other two great portions of our British territory, and it will be seen, historically, as well as argumentatively, that the way to tranquillize a people is not to enthral but to enlighten them. It is, in short, with general knowledge as it is with the knowledge of Christianity. There are incidental evils attendant on the progress of both; but a most glorious consummation will be the result of the perfecting of both. Let us go forth, without restraint, on the work of evangelizing the world, and the world, under such a process, will become the blissful abode of Christian and well-ordered families. And let us go forth, with equal alacrity, to the work of spreading education among our own people; and, instead of bringing on an anticipated chaos, will it serve to grace and to strengthen all the bulwarks of security in the midst of us. The growth of intelligence and of moral worth among the people, will at length stamp upon them all that majesty of which they will ever be ambitious; and, instead of a precarious tranquillity, resting upon the basis of an ignorance ever open to the influences of delusion, will the elements of peace, and truth, and righteousness, be seen to multiply along with the progress of learning in our land.

* What we regret most in our late disturbances, is, that it may serve to foment the prejudice which still exists against the cause of popular education. It is worthy of remark, that, of late years, both in Glasgow and Paisley, this cause has been most lamentably on the decline; insomuch that we will venture to say, there is no town population in Scotland which has become so closely assimilated, in this respect, to the manufacturing population of our sister country. Any danger which may be conceived to arise from education, proceeds not from the extent of it in any one class of society, but from the inequality of it between people either of the same, or of different classes; thus rendering one part of the population more manageably subservient to any designing villany or artifice that may exist in another part. The clear and direct way of restoring this inequality, is, not to darken and degrade all, which is impracticable, but, as much as possible, to enlighten all.

SERMON XLI.

On the Consistency between the Efficacy of Prayer, and the Uniformity of Nature.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,—and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."—2 PETER iii. 3, 4.

THE infidelity spoken of in our text, had for its basis the stability of nature, or rested on the imagination that her economy was perpetual and everlasting—and every day of nature's continuance added to the strength and inveteracy of this delusion. In proportion to the length of her past endurance, was there a firm confidence felt in her future perpetuity. The longer that nature lasted, or the older she grew, her final dissolution was held to be all the more improbable—till nothing seemed so unlikely to the atheistical men of that period, as the intervention of a God with a system of visible things, which looked so unchanging and so indestructible. It was like the contest of experience and faith, in which the former grew every day stronger and stronger, and the latter weaker and weaker, till at length it was wholly extinguished; and men in the spirit of defiance or ridicule, braved the announcement of a Judge who should appear at the end of the world, and mocked at the promise of His coming.

But there is another direction which infidelity often takes, beside the one specified in our text. It not only perverts to its own argument, what experience tells of the stability of nature; and so concludes that we have nothing to fear from the mandate of a God, laying sudden arrest and termination on its processes. It also perverts what experience tells of the uniformity of nature; and so concludes that we have nothing either to hope or to fear, from the intervention of a God during the continuance or the currency of these processes. Beside making nature independent of God for its duration, which they hold to be everlasting; they would also make nature to be independent of God for its course, which they hold to be unalterable. They tell us of the rigid and undeviating constancy from which nature is never known to fluctuate; and that in her immutable laws, in the march and regularity of her orderly progressions, they can discover no trace whatever of any interposition by the finger of a Deity. It is not only that things continue to be as they were from the beginning of creation; but that all things continue to act, as they did from the beginning of the creation—causes and effects following each other in wonted and unvariable succession, and the same circumstances ever issuing in the same consequents as before. With such a system of things, there is no room in their creed or in their imagination, for the actings of a God. To their eye, nature proceeds by the sure footsteps of a mute and unconscious materialism; nor can they recognise in its evolutions those characters of the spontaneous or the wilful, which bespeak a living God to have had any concern with it. He may have formed the mundane system at the first. he may have devised for matter its properties and its laws: but these properties, they tell us, never change; these laws never are relaxed or receded from. And so we may as well bid the storm itself cease from its violence, as supplicate the unseen Being whom we fancy to be sitting aloft and to direct the storm. This they hold to be a superstitious imagination, which all their experience of nature and of nature's immutability forbids them to entertain. By the one infidelity, they have banished a God from the throne of judgment. By the other infidelity, they have banished a God from the throne of providence. By the first they tell us, that a God has nought to do with the consummation of nature; or, rather, that nature has no consummation. By the second, they tell us that a God has nought to do with the history of nature. The

first infidelity would expunge from our creed the doctrine of a coming judgment. The second would expunge from it the doctrine of a present and a special providence, and the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer.

Now this last, though not just the infidelity of the text—yet being very much the same with it in principle—we hold it sufficiently textual, though we make it, and not the other the subject of our present argument. We admit the uniformity of visible nature—a lesson forced upon us by all experience. We admit that as far as our observation extends, nature has always proceeded in one invariable order—insomuch that the same antecedents have, without exception, been ever followed up by the same consequents; and that, saving the well accredited miracles of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, all things have so continued since the beginning of the creation.

We admit that, never in our whole lives, have we witnessed as the effect of man's prayer, any infringement made on the known laws of the universe; or that nature by receding from her constancy, to the extent that we have discovered it, has ever in one instance yielded to his supplicating cry. We admit that by no importunity from the voice of faith, or from any number and combination of voices, have we seen an arrest or a shift laid on the ascertained courses, whether of the material or the mental economy; or a single fulfilment of any sort, brought about in contravention, either to the known properties of any substances, or to the known principles of any established succession in the history of nature. These are our experiences; and we are aware the very experiences which ministered to the infidelity of our text, and do minister to the practical infidelity of thousands in the present day—yet in opposition to, or rather notwithstanding these experiences, universal and unexcepted though they be, do we affirm the doctrine of a superintending providence, as various and as special, as our necessities—the doctrine of a perpetual interposition from above, as manifoldly and minutely special, as are the believing requests which ascend from us to Heaven's throne.

We feel the importance of the subject, both in its application to the judgment that now hangs over us,* and to the infidelity of the present times. But we cannot hope to be fully understood, without your most strenuous and sustained attention—an attention, however, which we request may be kept up to the end, even though certain parts in the train of observation may not have been followed by you. What some may lose in those passages, where the subject is presented in the form of a general argument, may again be recovered, when we attempt to establish our doctrine by scripture, or to illustrate it by instances taken from the history of human affairs. In one way or other, you may seize on the reigning principle of that explanation, by which we endeavour to reconcile the efficacy of prayer with the uniformity of experience. And our purpose shall have been obtained, if we can at all help you to a greater confidence in the reality of a superintending providence, to a greater comfort and confidence in the act of making your requests known unto God.

Let us first give our view in all its generality, in the hope that any obscurity which may rest upon it in this form, will be dissipated or cleared up, in the subsequent appeals that we shall make, both to the lessons of the Bible, and to the lessons of human experience.

We grant then, we unreservedly grant, the uniformity of visible nature; and now let us compute how much, or how little, it amounts to. Grant of all our progressions, that, as far as our eye can carry us, they are invariable; and then let us only reflect how short a way we can trace any of them upwards. In speculating on the origin of an event, we may be able to assign the one which immediately preceded, and term it the proximate cause; or even ascend by two or three footsteps, till we have discovered some anterior event which we term the remote cause. But how soon do we arrive at the limit of possible investigation, beyond which if we attempt to go, we lose ourselves among the depths and the obscurities of a region that is unknown? Observation may conduct us a certain length backwards in the train of causes and effects; but, after having done its uttermost, we

* This sermon was preached during the prevalence of cholera.

feel, that, above and beyond its loftiest place of ascent, there are still higher steps in the train which we vainly try to reach, and find them inaccessible.

It is even so throughout all philosophy. After having arrived at the remotest cause which man can reach his way to, we shall ever find there are higher and remoter causes still, which distance all his powers of research, and so will ever remain in deepest concealment from his view. Of this higher part of the train he has no observation. Of these remoter causes, and their mode of succession, he can positively say nothing. For aught he knows, they may be under the immediate control of higher beings in the universe; or, like the upper part of a chain, a few of whose closing links are all that is visible to us, they may be directly appended to the throne, and at all times subject to the instant pleasure of a prayer-hearing God. And it may be by a responsive touch at the higher, and not the lower part of the progression, that He answers our prayers. It may be not by an act of intervention among those near and visible causes, where intervention would be a miracle; it may be by an unseen, but not less effectual act of intervention, among the remote and therefore the occult causes, that He adapts Himself to the various wants and meets the various petitions of His children. If it be in the latter way that He conducts the affairs of His daily government—then may He rule by a providence as special, as are the needs and the occasions of His family; and, with an ear open to every cry, might He provide for all and administer to all, without one infringement on the uniformity of visible nature. If the responsive touch be given at the lower part of the chain, then the answer to prayer is by miracle, or by a contravention to some of the known sequences of nature. But if the responsive touch be given at a sufficiently higher part of the chain, then the answer is as effectually made, but not by miracle, and without violence to any one succession of history or nature which philosophy has ascertained—because the reaction to the prayer strikes at a place that is higher than the highest investigations of philosophy. It is not by a visible movement within the region of human observation, but by an invisible movement in the transcendental region above it, that the prayer is met and responded to. The Supernal Power of the Universe, the mighty and unseen Being who sits aloft, and has been significantly styled the Cause of causes—He, in immediate contact with the upper extremities of every progression, there puts forth an overruling influence which tells and propagates downwards to the lower extremities; and so, by an agency placed too remote either for the eye of sense or for all the instruments of science to discover, may God, in answer if He choose to prayer, fix and determine every series of events—of which nevertheless all that man can see is but the uniformity of the closing footsteps—a few of the last causes and effects following each other in their wonted order. It is thus that we reconcile all the experience which man has of nature's uniformity, with the effect and significancy of his prayers to the God of nature. It is thus that at one and the same time, do we live under the care of a presiding God, and among the regularities of a harmonious universe.

These views are in beautiful accordance with the simple and sublime theology unfolded to us in the book of Job—where, whether in the movements of the animated kingdom below, or the great evolutions that take place in the upper regions of the atmosphere, the phenomena and the processes of visible nature are sketched with a masterly hand. It is in the midst of these scenes and impressive descriptions, that we are told—"lo these are parts of his ways" The translation does not say what parts; but the original does. They are but the lower parts—the endings as it were of the different processes—the last and lowest footsteps, which are all that science can investigate; and of which, throughout the whole of her limited ascent, she has traced the uniformity. But she has traced it a very short way: or, in the language of the patriarch, who estimates aright the achievements of philosophy—how little a portion is heard of Him—how few the known footsteps which are beneath the veil to the unknown steps and workings which are above it; and so, the thunder, or rather the inward and secret movements of His power, who can understand?

"He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds: and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" Job xxvi. 8—14.

The last sentence of this magnificent passage were better translated thus—These are the parts, or the lower endings of his ways;—but the secret working of his power, who can understand?

That part of the economy of the divine administration, in virtue of which God works, not without but by secondary causes, is frequently intimated in the book of Psalms.

"Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire." Ps. civ. 4.

Or, as it might have been translated—"Who maketh the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his servant."

But without the aid of any emendations in our version, this subserviency of visible nature to the invisible God, is distinctly laid before us in the following passages.

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; the soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Psalm cvii. 23—31.

He raises the tempest, not without the wind, but by the wind. In the one way it would have been a miracle; in the other way it is alike effectual, but without any change in the properties or laws of visible nature—without what we commonly understand by a miracle. He does not bring the vessel against the wind to its desired haven; but he makes the storm a calm, and so the waves thereof are still. Our Saviour also bade the winds into peace; and the miracle there lay in the effect following on the heard utterance of His voice. A voice no less effectual though unheard by us, overrules at all times the working of nature's elements; and brings the ordinary processes, as well as the marked and miraculous exception to them, under the control of a divine agency.

"Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of the treasuries." Psalm cxxxv. 6, 7.

Here, without any change of translation, we are told of the subserviency of the visible instruments, to the invisible but real agency of Him who wields them at His pleasure. In this passage, the winds are plainly represented to us as the messengers of God, and the flaming fire as his servant. He changes no properties, and no visible processes—working, not without the wind, but by it—not without the electric matter, but by it—not without the rain, but by it—not without the vapour, but by it. Let the philosopher tell how far back he can go, in exploring the method and order of these respective agencies. Then we have only to point further back and ask—on what evidence he can tell, that the fiat and the finger of a God are not there. We grant the observed order to be invariable, save when God chooses to interpose by miracle. But whether he does or not—from that chamber of his hidden operations, which philosophy has not found its way to, can he so direct all, so subordinate all, that whatever the Lord pleases, that does he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

"Praise the Lord from the earth, ye

dragons, and all deeps; Fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word." Psalm cxlviii. 7, 8.

The stormy wind fulfilleth his word.

Our last example shall be from the New Testament. "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 17.

This last example will prepare you to go along with one of the particular instance we are just to bring forward, of a special prayer met by a special fulfilment.

We are thus enabled to perceive what the respective provinces are of philosophy and faith. Every event in nature or history, has a cause in some prior event that went before it, and that again in another, and that again in another still higher than itself in this scale of precedency; and so might we climb our ascending way from cause to cause, from consequent to antecedent—till the investigation has been carried upwards, from the farthest possible verge of human discovery. There it is that the domain of observation or of philosophy terminates; but we mistake, if we think that there the progression, whose terms or whose footsteps we have traced thus far, also terminates. Beyond this limit we cannot track the pathway of causation—not because the pathway ceases, but because we have lost sight of it—having now retired from view among the depths and mysteries of an unknown region, which we, with our bounded faculties, cannot enter. This may be termed the region of faith—placed as it were above the region of experience. The things which are done in the higher, have an overruling influence, by lines of transmission, on all that happens in the lower—yet without one breach or interruption to the uniformity of visible nature. Whatever is done in the transcendental region—be it by the influence of prayer; by the immediate finger of God; by the ministry of angels; by the spontaneous movements, whether of displeasure or of mercy above, responding to the sins or to the supplicating cries that ascend from earth's inhabitants below—that will pass by a descending influence into the palpable regions of sense and observation—yet, from the moment it comes within its limits, will it proceed without the semblance of a miracle, but by the march and the movement of nature's regularity, to its final consummation. God hath in wisdom ordained a regimen of general laws; and, that man might gather from the memory of the past, those lessons of observation which serve for the guidance of the future, He hath enacted that all those successions shall be invariable, which have their place and their fulfilment within the world of sensible experience. Yet God has not, on that account, made the world independent of Himself. He keeps a perpetual hold on all its events and processes notwithstanding. He does not dissever Himself, for a single instant, from the government and the guardianship of His own universe; and can still, notwithstanding all we see of nature's rigid uniformity, adapt the forthgoings of His power to all the wants and all the prayers of His dependent family. For this purpose, He does not need to stretch forth His hand on the inferior and the visible links of any progression, so as to shift the known successions of experience; or at all to intermeddle with the lessons and the laws of this great schoolmaster. He may work in secret, and yet perform all His pleasure—not by the achievement of a miracle on nature's open platform; but by the touch of one or other of those master springs, which lie within the recesses of her inner laboratory. There, and at His place of supernal command by the fountain heads of influence, He can turn whithersoever He will the machinery of our world, and without the possibility of human eye of detecting the least infringement on any of its processes—at once upholding the regularity of visible nature, and the supremacy of nature's invisible God.

But we are glad to make our escape, and now to make it conclusively, from the obscurer part of our reasoning on this subject—although, most assuredly, these are not the times for passing it wholly by; or for withholding aught which can make in favour of the much derided cause of humble and earnest piety. But, instead of propounding our doctrine in the terms of a general argument, let us try the effect of a few special instances—by which, perhaps, we might more readily gain the consent of your understanding to our views.

When the sigh of the midnight storm sends fearful agitation into a mother's heart, as she thinks of her sailor boy, now exposed to its fury, on the waters of a distant ocean—these stern disciples of a hard and stern infidelity would, on this notion of a rigid and impracticable constancy in nature, forbid her prayers—holding them to be as impotent and vain, though addressed to the God who has all the elements in his hand, as if lifted up with senseless importunity to the raving elements themselves. Yet nature would strongly prompt the aspiration; and, if there be truth in our argument, there is nothing in the constitution of the universe to forbid its accomplishment. God might answer the prayer, not by unsettling the order of secondary causes—not by reversing any of the wonted successions that are known to take place in the ever-restless ever-heaving atmosphere—not by sensible miracle among those nearer footsteps which the philosopher has traced; but by the touch of an immediate hand among the deep recesses of materialism, which are beyond the ken of all its instruments. It is thence that the Sovereign of nature might bid the wild uproar of the elements into silence. It is there that the virtue comes out of Him, which passes like a winged messenger from the invisible to the visible; and at the threshold of separation between these two regions, impresses the direction of the Almighty's will on the remotest cause which science can mount her way to. From this point in the series, the path of descent along the line of nearer and proximate causes may be rigidly invariable; and in respect of the order, the precise undeviating order, wherewith they follow each other, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The heat, and the vapour, and the atmospherical precipitates, and the consequent moving forces by which either to raise a new tempest or to lay an old one—all these may proceed, and without one hair-breadth of deviation, according to the successions of our established philosophy—yet each be but the obedient messenger of that voice, which gave forth its command at the fountain-head of the whole operation; which commissioned the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, and made lightnings for the rain, and brought the wind out of his treasuries. These are the palpable steps of the process; but an unseen influence, behind the farthest limit of man's boasted discoveries, may have set them agoing And that influence may have been accorded to prayer—the power that moves Him, who moves the universe; and who, without violence to the known regularities of nature, can either send forth the hurricane over the face of the deep or recall it at His pleasure. Such is the joyful persuasion of faith, and proud philosophy cannot disprove it. A woman's feeble cry may have overruled the elemental war; and hushed into silence this wild frenzy of the winds and the waves; and evoked the gentler breezes from the cave of their slumbers; and wafted the vessel of her dearest hopes, and which held the first and and fondest of her earthly treasures, to its desired haven.

And so of other prayers. It is not without instrumentality, but by means of it, that they are answered. The fulfilment is preceded by the accustomed series of cause and effects; and preceded as far upward, as the eye of man can trace the pedigree of sensible causation. Were it by a break anywhere in the traceable part of this series that the prayer was answered, then its fulfilment would be miraculous. But without a miracle the prayer is answered as effectually. Thus, for example, is met the cry of a people under famine, for a speedy and plenteous harvest—not by the instant appearance of the ripened grain, at the bidding of a voice from heaven—not preternaturally cherished into maturity, in the midst of storms; but ushered onwards, by a grateful succession of shower and sunshine, to a prosperous consummation. An abundant harvest is granted to prayer—yet without violence, either to the laws of the vegetable physiology, or to any of the known laws by which the alterations of the weather are determined. It must be acknowledged by every philosopher, how soon it is that we arrive in both departments on the confines of deepest mystery; and, let the constancy of patent and palpable nature be as unaltered and unalterable as it may, God reserves to Himself the place of mastery and command, whether among the arcana of vegetation or the depths of meteorology. He

may at once permit a most rigid uniformity to the visible workings of nature's mechanism—while among its invisible, which are also its antecedent workings, He retains that station of preeminence and power, whence He brings all things to pass according to His pleasure. It is not by sending bread from the upper store-houses of the firmament, that He answers this prayer. It is by sending rain and fruitful seasons. The intermediate machinery of nature is not cast aside, but pressed into the service; and the prayer is answered by a secret touch from the finger of the Almighty, which sets all its parts and all its processes agoing. With the eye of sense, man sees nothing but nature revolving in her wonted cycles, and the months following each other in bright and beautiful succession. In the eye of faith, ay and of sound philosophy, every year of smiling plenty upon earth is a year crowned with the goodness of heaven.

But to touch on that which more immediately concerns us, let us now instance prayer for health. We ask, if here philosophy has taken possession of the whole domain, and left no room for the prerogatives and the exercise of faith —no hope for prayer? Has the whole intermediate space between the first cause and the ultimate phenomena, been so thoroughly explored; and the rigid uniformity of every footstep in the series been so fixed and ascertained by observation, as to preclude the rationality of prayer, and leave it without a meaning, because without the possibility of a fulfilment? Where is the physician or the physiologist who can tell, that he has made the ascent from one prognostic or one predisposition to another—till he reached even to the primary fountain-head of that influence, which either medicates or distempers the human frame; and found throughout an adamantine chain of necessity, not to be broken by the sufferer's imploring cry? We ask the guardians of our health, how far upon the pathway of causation, the discoveries of medical science have carried them; and whether, above and beyond their farthest look into the mysteries of our framework, there are not higher mysteries; where a God may work in secret and the hand of the Omnipotent be stretched forth to heal or destroy? It is thence, He may answer prayer. It is from this summit of ascendancy, that He may direct all the processes of the human constitution—yet without violating in any instance, the uniformity of the few last and visible footsteps. Because science has traced, and so far determined this uniformity, she has not therefore exiled God from His own universe: She has not forced the Deity to quit His hold of its machinery, or to forego by one iota the most perfect command of all its evolutions. His superintendence is as close and continuous and special, as if all things were done by the visible intervention of his hand. Without superstition, with the fullest recognition of science in all its prerogatives and all its glories—might we feel our immediate dependence on God; and, even in this our philosophic day, and notwithstanding all that philosophy has made known to us, might we still assert and vindicate the higher philosophy of prayer—asking of God, as patriarchs and holy men of old did before us, for safety and sustenance and health and all things.

And if ever in the dealings of God with the people of the earth, if ever science had less of the territory and faith had more of it, it is in that undisclosed mystery which still hangs over us; which now for many months has shed baleful influences on your crowded city; and whereof no man can tell whether in another day or another hour, it might not descend with fell swoop into the midst of his own family—entering there with rude unceremonious footstep, and hurrying to one of its rapid and inglorious funerals the dearest of its inmates. Never on any other theme did philosophy make more entire demonstration of her own helplessness; and perhaps at the very first footsteps of the investigation, or on the question of the proximate cause, the controversy is loudest of all. But however justly of the proximate cause discovery may be made, or however remotely among the anterior causes the investigation might be carried, never will proud philosophy be able to annul the intervention of a God, or purchase to herself the privilege of mocking at the poor man's prayer. Indeed, amid the exuberance and variety of speculation on this unsettled and unknown subject, there was one remote cause assigned for

this pestilent visitation, which, so far from shutting out, rather suggests and that most forcibly the intervention of a God immediately before it. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria: and they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes."* We hope to have made it plain to you, let this or any other cause be found the true one, that, however high the path of discovery may have been traced, yet higher still there is place for the finger of a God above to regulate all the designs of a special providence, and to move in conformity with all the accepted prayers of His family below. But among the scoffers of our latter day, even in the absence or the want of all discovery, the finger of a God is disowned; and it seems to mark how resolute and at the same time how hopeless is the infidelity of modern times, that, just in proportion to our ignorance of all the secondary or the sensible causes, is our haughty refusal of any homage to the first cause. It is passing strange of this disease, that, after having baffled every attempt to find out its dependence on ought that is on earth, the idea of its dependence on the will of Heaven should of all others have been laughed most impiously to scorn. The voice of derision and defiance was first heard in our high places; and thence it passed, as if by infection, into general society. And so, many have disowned the power and the will of the Deity in this visitation. They most unphilosophically, we think, as well as impiously have spurned at prayer.

But we cannot pass away from this part of our subject, without adverting to a recent event, the thought of which is at present irresistibly obtruded on us, and by which this parish and congregation but a few weeks ago have been deprived of one of the most conspicuous of our office-bearers—one who constitutionally the kindest and most indulgent of men, was the most alive of all I ever knew to the wants and the miseries of our common nature; and who finely alive to all the impulses and soft touches of humanity, laboured night and day in the vocation of doing good continually. But, instead of saying that he laboured, I should say that he luxuriated in well doing; for never was a heart more attuned to ready and responsive agreement with the calls of benevolence than his, and sooner would I believe of nature that she had receded from her constancy, than of him that e'er

"He looked unmoved on misery's languid eye,
Or heard her sinking voice without a sigh.,'

Of all the recollections which the friends either of my youth or of my manhood have left behind them in this land of dying men, there is none more beautifully irradiated—whether I look back on the mildness of his christian worth, or on those sensibilities of an open and generous and finely attempered spirit, which gives such a charm to human companionship. And as the second great law is like unto the first; so that love of his which went forth so diffusively amongst his fellows upon earth, we humbly hope, was at once the indication and the consequent of a love that ascended with high and habitual aspiration to God in heaven. It was through a brief and tremendous agony that he was carried from the world of sense to the world of spirits; and yet it is a happiness to be told that the faith and hope of the gospel lighted up a halo over his expiring moments, and that, ere death had closed his eyes, he through nearly an hour of audible prayer gave his last testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.*

But to recall ourselves from this theme of sadness, we trust you will now understand of every event in nature or history, that each in the order of causation is preceded by a train which went before it, and that man's observations can extend more or less a certain way along this train, till they are lost in the undiscovered and at length undiscoverable recesses which are placed beyond the cognizance of the human faculties. Now it is because of the higher and unknown part which belongs to every such series

* Isaiah vii. 18, 19.

* This note refers to John Wilson, Esq.' Silk merchant Glasgow, who was Kirk Treasurer of St. John's, and to the deep regret of all who knew him, was carried off by cholera in the neighbourhood of Glasgow.

that we bid you respect the lessons of piety, for God hath not so constructed the universe as to remove it from the hold of His own special management and superintendence; and therefore, not in one thing the Bible tells us, but in every thing we should make our requests known unto God. But again, it is because of the lower and the known or ascertained and strictly uniform part which belongs to every series, that we bid you respect the lessons of experience; for God did not so conduct the affairs of His universe, as to thrust forth His invisible hand among its visible successions; but while He keeps a perpetual and ascendant hold among the springs of that machinery which is behind the curtain, He leaves untouched all those wonted regularities, which, on the stage of observation, are patent to human eyes. Now these are the respective domains of philosophy and faith, and this is the use to be made of them. Looking to the one, we learn the subordination of all nature. Looking to the other, we learn the constancy of visible nature. These great truths harmonize; and between the lessons which they give there is the fullest harmony. He who is enlightened and acts upon both is at one and the same time a man of prudence and a man of prayer; who never loses his confidence in God, yet, as awake to the manifestations of experience as if they were the manifestations of the divine will, never counts upon a miracle. He holds perpetual converse with heaven; yet shapes his earthly conduct by his earthly circumstances. In his habits of diligence he proceeds on the uniformity of visible nature, and he does accordingly. In his habits of devotion he knows that there is a visible power above which subordinates all nature, and he prays accordingly. He is neither the mystic who will not act, nor is he the infidel who will not pray. He knows how to combine both, or how to combine wisdom with piety—that rare and beauteous combination unknown to the world at large, yet realized by many a cottage patriarch, who, without attempting, without being capable in fact of any profound or philosophical adjustment between them, but on his simple understanding alone of Scripture lessons and Scripture examples, unites the most strenuous diligence in the use of means, with the strictest dependence upon God. Without the combination of these two, there has been nothing great, nothing effective in the history of the church; and, on the other hand, we find that all the most illustrious, whether in philanthropy or in christian patriotism, from the apostle Paul to the highest names in the descending history of the world, as Augustine and Luther and Knox and Howard, that, superadding the wisdom of experience to a sense of deepest piety, they were at once men of performance and men of prayer.

But let us look for a moment to the highest example of all, even that of our Saviour when on earth; for in the history of His temptation, will the eye of the diligent observer recognize an application and a moral, which serve, we think very finely, to illustrate our whole argument.

The first proposal of the adversary was, that, because an hungered by the abstinence of forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, he should turn stones into bread; and the reply of our Saviour that "man liveth not by bread alone but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God" bespoke His confidence in that Supreme Power which overrules all nature. Now observe how this is followed up by the tempter—since such His confidence I may prevail upon Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, employing the very argument He just has used, even the overruling power of that God who can bear Him up by the intervention of angels lest he dash his foot against a stone. The reply "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" tells us, that the same Being who overrules all nature, never interferes, but for some worthy and great purpose to thwart the established successions of visible nature; and that it is wrong, it is wanton, in any of his creatures so to act, as if he counted upon such an interference. It is a noble lesson for us never to traverse or neglect the means which experience hath told us are effectual for good; and never to brave, but at the call of imperious duty, the exposures which the same experience has told us, on our knowledge or recollection of Nature's established processes, are followed up by evil. Our Saviour

would not, in defiance to the law of gravitation, cast himself off from that place of security which upheld Him against its power. And neither should we ever, though in defiance but to the probable law of contagion, or by what (to borrow a usual phrase) might well be termed a tempting of Providence, refuse those places or cast away those measures of security, that are found to protect us against the virulence of this destroyer. In a word, between the wisdom of piety and the wisdom of experience there is most profound harmony—unknown to the infidel, and so he hath cast off prayer; unknown to the fanatic, and so he hath cast prudence away from him.

And we appeal to you, my brethren, if there be not much in the state and recent history of our nation to confirm these views. We rejoiced in the appointment several months ago of a national fast, and that notwithstanding the contempt and annoyance of the many infidel manifestations to which the appointment had been exposed—hoping, as we then did, that it would meet with a duteous and a general response from the people of the land; and perceiving afterwards, in our limited sphere, the obvious solemnity, and we trust in a goodly number of instances, the deep and heart-felt sacredness of its observation among our families. It is well that there should be a public and a prayerful recognition of God in the midst of us; and we have failed in our argument, we have failed, whether from the obscurity of its illustrations or the obscurity of its terms, in obtaining for it the sympathy of your understandings—if you perceive not, that, in the distinct relation of cause and effect, there is a real substantive connection between the supplications which ascend for health and safety from the midst of a land, and the actual warding off of disease and death from its habitations. But in fullest harmony with this it is also well, I would go farther and say there is no infringement upon deepest piety in pronouncing it indispensable—that while we invoke the Heavenly Agent who sitteth above for every effectual blessing, all the earthly means and earthly instruments should be in complete and orderly preparation. We are aware that in many places and on many occasions these have been rebelled against.* And it but enhances the lesson, beside carrying a most impressive rebuke, both to the fanaticism of an ill-understood Christianity; and to the ignorant frenzy of an ill-educated and, in respect to the woeful deficiency both of churches and schools, we would say a neglected population—that just in those places where the offered help of the physician was most strenuously and most ungratefully resisted, and at times indeed by violence overborne, that there it was where the disease reasserted its power, and as if with the hand of an avenger shook menace and terror among the families. As if the same God who bids us in His word make request unto Him in all things, would furthermore tell us by His Providence, that, in no one thing will He permit a heedless invasion on the regularities of that course which He Himself has established; that with His own hand He ordained the footsteps of Nature, and He will chastise the presumption of those who shall think to contravene the ordinance; that experience is the school-master authorized by Him for the government and guidance of His family on earth, and that He will resent the outrage done to her authority whenever her lessons or her laws are wantonly violated.

In conclusion let us observe, that, on the one hand, we shall be glad if aught that has been said will help to conciliate our mere religionists to the lessons of experience and of sound philosophy; and, in opposition to those senseless prejudices, by which they have often brought the most unmerited derision and discredit on their own cause, we would remind them that it is not all philosophy which Scripture denounces, but only vain philosophy—it is not all science which it deprecates, but only the science falsely so called.

* In Edinburgh the metropolis of medical science, a vigorous system of expedients was instituted; and nothing could exceed the promptitude and the watchfulness and the activity, at a moment's call, wherewith the disease was met and repressed at every point of its outbreakings. And we cannot imagine a more striking demonstration for the importance of human agency, diligently operating on all the resources which Nature and experience have placed within our reach, than is furnished by a comparison between the perfection of our city arrangements, and the fewness of our city deaths.

On the other hand we should rejoice in witnessing the mere philosopher, or man of secular and experimental wisdom, more conciliated than he is to the lessons of Religion, and to that humble faith which is the great and actuating spirit of its observations and its pieties and its prayers. We have heard that the study of Natural Science disposes to Infidelity. But we feel persuaded that this is a danger only associated with a slight and partial, never with a deep and adequate and comprehensive view of its principles. It is very possible that the conjunction between science and scepticism may at present be more frequently realised than in former days; but this is only because, in spite of all that is alleged about this our more enlightened day and more enlightened public, our science is neither so deeply founded nor of such firm and thorough staple as it wont to be. We have lost in depth what we have gained in diffusion—having neither the massive erudition, nor the gigantic scholarship, nor the profound and well-laid philosophy of a period that has now gone by; and it is to this that infidelity stands indebted for her triumphs among the scoffers and the superficialists of a half-learned generation.

SERMON XLII.

Heaven a Character and not a Locality.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."—Rev. xxii. 11.

Our first remark on this passage of Scripture, is, how very palpably and nearly it connects time with eternity. The character wherewith we sink into the grave at death, is the very character wherewith we shall re-appear on the day of resurrection. The character which habit has fixed and strengthened through life, adheres, it would seem, to the disembodied spirit, through the mysterious interval which separates the day of our dissolution from the day of our account—when it will again stand forth, the very image and substance of what it was, to the inspection of the Judge and the awards of the judgment-seat. The moral lineaments which be graven on the tablet of the inner man, and which every day of an unconverted life makes deeper and more indelible than before, will retain the very impress they have gotten—unaltered and uneffaced, by the transition from our present to our future state of existence. There will be a dissolution, and then a reconstruction of the body, from the sepulchral dust into which it had mouldered. But there will be neither a dissolution nor a renovation of the spirit, which, indestructible both in character and essence, will weather and retain its identity, on the mid-way passage between this world and the next—so that at the time of quitting its earthly tenement we may say, that, if unjust now it will be unjust still, if filthy now it will be filthy still, if righteous now it will be righteous still, and if holy now it will be holy still.

Our second remark, suggested by the scripture now under consideration, is that there be many analogies of nature and experience, which even death itself does not interrupt There is nought more familiar to our daily observation than the power and inveteracy of habit—insomuch that any vicious propensity is strengthened by every new act of indulgence; any virtuous principle is more firmly established than before, by every new act of resolute obedience to its dictates. The law which connects the actings of boyhood, or of youth, with the character of manhood, is the identical, the unrepealed law which connects our actings in time with our character through eternity. The way in which the moral discipline of youth prepares for the honours and the enjoyments of a virtuous manhood, is the very way in which the moral and spiritual discipline of a whole life pre

pares for a virtuous and happy immortality. And, on the other hand, the succession, as of cause and effect, from a profligate or a dishonest manhood, to a disgraced and worthless old age—is just the succession, also of cause and effect, between the misdeeds and the depravities of our history on earth, and an inheritance of worthlessness and wretchedness for ever. The law of moral continuity between the different stages of human life, is also the law of continuity between the two worlds—which even the death that intervenes does not violate. Be he a saint or a sinner, each shall be filled with the fruit of his own ways—so that when translated into their respective places of fixed and everlasting destination, the one shall rejoice through eternity in that pure element of goodness, which here he loved and aspired after; the other, a helpless, a degraded victim of those passions which lorded over him through life, shall be irrevocably doomed to that worst of torments and that worst of tyranny—the torment of his own accursed nature, the inexorable tyranny of evil.

Our third remark suggested by this scripture is, that it affords no very dubious perspective of the future heaven and the future hell of the New Testament. We are aware of the material images employed in scripture, and by which it bodies forth its representation of both—of the fire, and the brimstone, and the lake of living agony, and the gnashing of teeth, and the wailings, the ceaseless wailings of distress and despair unutterable, by which the one is set before us in characters of terror and most revolting hideousness—of the splendour, the spaciousness, the music, the floods of melody and sights of surpassing loveliness, by which the other is set before us in characters of bliss and brightness unperishable; with all that can regale the glorified senses of creatures, rejoicing for ever in the presence and before the throne of God. We stop not to inquire, and far less to dispute, whether these descriptions, in the plain meaning and very letter of them, are to be realized. But we hold that it would purge theology from many of its errors, and that it would guide and enlighten the practical Christianity of many honest inquirers—if the moral character both of heaven and hell were more distinctly recognized, and held a more prominent place in the regards and contemplations of men. If it indeed be true that the moral, rather than the material, is the main ingredient, whether of the coming torment or the coming ecstasy—then the hell of the wicked may be said to have already begun, and the heaven of the virtuous may be said to have already begun. The one, in the bitterness of an unhinged and dissatisfied spirit, has a foretaste of the wretchedness before him; the other, in the peace and triumphant complacency of an approving conscience, has a foretaste of the happiness before him. Each is ripening for his own everlasting destiny; and whether in the depravities that deepen and accumulate on the character of the one, or in the graces that brighten and multiply upon the other—we see materials enough, either for the worm that dieth not, or for the pleasures that are for evermore.

But again, it may be asked, will spiritual elements alone suffice to make up, either the intense and intolerable wretchedness of a hell, or the intense beatitude of a heaven? For an answer to this question, let us first turn your attention to the former of these receptacles. And we ask you to think of the state of that heart in respect to sensation, which is the seat of a concentrated and all-absorbing selfishness, which feels for no other interest than its own, and holds no fellowship of truth or honesty, or confidence with the fellow-beings around it. The owner of such a heart may live in society; but, cut off as he is by his own sordid nature from the reciprocities of honourable feeling and good faith, he may be said to live an exile in the midst of it. He is a stranger to the day-light of the moral world; and, instead of walking abroad on an open platform of free and fearless communion with his fellows, he spends a cold and heartless existence in the hiding-place of his own thoughts. You mistake it, if you think of this creeping and ignoble creature, that he knows aught of the real truth or substance of enjoyment; or however successful he may have been in the wiles of his paltry selfishness, that a sincere or a solid satisfaction has been the result of it. On the contrary, if you enter his heart, you will there find a dis-

taste and disquietude in the lurking sense of its own worthlessness; and that dissevered from the respect of society without, it finds no refuge within, where he is abandoned by the respect of his own conscience. It does not consist with moral nature, that there should be internal happiness or internal harmony, when the moral sense is made to suffer perpetual violence. A man of cunning and concealment, however dexterous, however triumphant in his worthless policy, is not at ease. The stoop, the downcast regards, the dark and sinister expression, of him who cannot lift up his head among his fellow men, or look his companions in the face, are the sensible proofs, that he who knows himself to be dishonest feels himself to be degraded; and the inward sense of dishonour which haunts and humbles him here, is but the commencement of that shame and everlasting contempt to which he shall awaken hereafter.

This, you will observe, is a purely moral chastisement; and, apart altogether from the infliction of violence or pain on the sentient economy, is enough to overwhelm the spirit that is exercised thereby. Let him then that is unjust now be unjust still; and, in stepping from time to eternity, he bears, in his own distempered bosom, the materials of his coming vengeance along with him. The character itself will be the executioner of its own condemnation; and when, instead of each suffering apart, the unrighteous are congregated together—as in the parable of the tares, where, instead of each plant being severally destroyed, the order is given to bind them up in bundles and burn them—we may be well assured, that, where the turbulence and disorder of an unrighteous society are superadded to those sufferings which prey in secrecy and solitude within the heart of each individual member, a ten-fold fiercer and more intolerable agony will ensue from it. The anarchy of a state, when the authority of its government is for a time suspended, forms but a feeble representation of that everlasting anarchy, when the unrighteous of all ages are let loose to act and react with unmitigated violence on each other. In this conflict of assembled myriads; this fierce and fell collision between the outrages of injustice on the one side, and the outcries of resentment on the other; and, though no pain were inflicted, in this war of passions and of purposes, the passion and purpose of violence in one quarter calling forth the passion and the purpose of keenest vengeance back again—though no material or sentient agony were felt—though a war of disembodied spirits—yet in the wild tempest of emotions alone—the hatred, the fury, the burning recollection of injured rights, and the brooding thoughts of yet unfulfilled retaliation—in these, and these alone, do we behold the materials enough of a dire and dreadful pandemonium; and, apart from corporeal suffering altogether, may we behold, in the full and final developments of character alone, enough for imparting all its corrosion to the worm that dieth not, enough for sustaining in all its fierceness the fire that is not quenched.

But there is another moral ingredient in the future sufferings of the wicked, beside the one of which we have now spoken—suggested to us by the second clause of our text; and from which we learn that, not only will the unjust man carry his falsehoods and his frauds along with him to the place of condemnation, but that also the voluptuary will carry his unsanctified habits and unhallowed passions thitherward. "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." We would here take the opportunity of exposing, what we fear is a frequent delusion in society—who give their respect to the man of honour and integrity—and he does not forfeit that respect, though known at the same time to be a man of dissipation. Not that *we* think any one of the virtues, which enter into the composition of a perfect character, can suffer, without all the other virtues suffering along with it. We believe that a conjunction, between a habit of unlawful pleasure and the maintenance of a strict resolute exalted equity and truth, is very seldom, we could almost say, is never realised. The man of forbidden indulgence, in the prosecution of his objects, has a thousand degrading fears to encounter; and many concealments to practise; perhaps low and unworthy artifices to which he must descend; and how can either his honour or his humanity be said to survive, if at length, in his heedless and impetuous

career, he shall trample on the dearest rights and the most sacred interests of families? With us it has all the authority of a moral aphorism, that the sobrieties of human virtue can never be invaded, without the equities of human virtue also being invaded. The moralities of human life are too closely linked and interwoven with each other, as that though one should be detached, the others might be left uninjured and entire; and so no one can cast his purity away from him, without a violence being done to the general moral structure and consistency of his whole character. But, be this as it may; we have the authority of the text and the oft reiterated affirmations of the New Testament, for saying of the voluptuary, that, if the countenance of the world be not withdrawn from him, the gate of heaven is at least shut against him; that nothing unclean or unholy can enter there; and that, carrying his uncrucified affections into the place of condemnation, he will find them too to be the ministers of wrath, the executioners of a still sorer vengeance. The loathing, the remorse, the felt and conscious degradation, the dreariness of heart that follow in the train of guilty indulgence here—these form but the beginning of his sorrows; and are but the presages and the precursors of that deeper wretchedness, which, by the unrepealed laws of moral nature, the same character will entail on its possessors in another state of existence. They are but the penalties of vice in embryo, and they may give at least the conception of what are these penalties in full. It will add—it will add inconceivably, to the darkness and disorder of that moral chaos, in which the impenitent shall spend their eternity—when the uproar of the bacchanalian and the licentious emotions is thus super-added, to the selfish and malignant passions of our nature; and when the frenzy of unsated desire, followed up by the languor and the compunction of its worthless indulgence, shall make up the sad history of many an unhappy spirit. We need not to dwell on the picture, though it brings out into bolder relief the all-important truth, that there is an inherent bitterness in sin; that, by the very constitution of our nature, moral evil is its own curse and its own worse punishment; that the wicked on the other side of death, but reap what they sow on this side of it; and that, whether we look to the tortures of a distempered spirit or to the countless ills of a distempered society, we may be very sure that to the character of its inmates—a character which they have fostered upon earth, and which now remains fixed on them through eternity—the main wretchedness of hell is owing.

Before quitting this part of the subject, we have but one remark more to offer. It may be felt as if we had overstated the power of mere character to beget a wretchedness at all approaching to the wretchedness of hell—seeing that the character is often realised in this world, without bringing along with it a distress or a discomfort which is at all intolerable. Neither the unjust man of our text, nor the licentious man of our text, is seen to be so unhappy here, in virtue of the moral characteristics which respectively belong to them, as to justify the imagination, that there, these characteristics will be of power, to effectuate such anguish and disorder of spirit as we have now been representing. But it is forgotten, first, that the world presents in its business, its amusements, and its various gratifications, a refuge from the mental agonies of reflection and remorse—and, secondly, that the governments of the world offer a restraint against the outbreakings of violence, which would keep up a perpetual anarchy in the species. Let us simply conceive of these two securities against our having even now a hell upon earth, that they are both taken down; that there is no longer such a world as ours, affording to each individual spirit innumerable diversions from the burden of its own thoughts; and no longer such a human government as ours, affording to general society a powerful defence against the countless variety of ills, that would otherwise rage and tumultuate within its borders—then, as sure as that a solitary prison is felt by every criminal to be the most dreadful of all punishments; and as sure as that, on the authority of law being suspended, the reign of terror would commence, and the unchained passions of humanity would go forth over the face of the land to raven and to destroy—so surely, out of moral elements and influences alone, might an eternity of utter

wretchedness and despair be entailed on the rebellious: And, only let all the unjust and all the licentious of our text be formed into a community by themselves, and the Christianity which now acts as a purifying and preserving salt upon the earth be wholly removed from them; and then it will be seen that the picture has not been overcharged; but that the wretchedness is intense and universal, just because the wickedness reigns uncontrolled, without mixture and without mitigation.

But we now exchange this appalling for a delightful contemplation. The next clause of our text suggests to us the moral character of heaven. We learn from it that, on the universal principle "as a tree falleth so it lies," the righteous now will be righteous still. We no more dispute the material accompaniments of heaven, than we dispute the material accompaniments in the place of condemnation. But still we must affirm of the happiness that reigns, and holds unceasing jubilee there —that, mainly and pre-eminently, it is the happiness of virtue; that the joy of the eternal state is not so much a sensible or a tasteful or even an intellectual as it is a moral and spiritual joy; that it is a thing of mental, infinitely more than it is a thing of corporeal gratification; and, to convince us how much the former has the power and predominance over the latter, we bid you reflect, that, even in this world, with all the defect and disorder of its materialism, the curse upon its ground inflicting the necessity of sore labour, and the angry tempest from its sky after destroying or sweeping off the fruits of it, the infirmity of their feeble and distempered frames, after the pining sickness and at times the sore agony—yet, in spite of these, we ask whether it would not hold nearly if not universally true, that if all men were righteous then all men would be happy. Just imagine for a moment, that honour and integrity and benevolence were perfect and universal in the world; that each held the property and right and reputation of his neighbour to be dear to him as his own; that the suspicions and the jealousies and the heart-burnings, whether of hostile violence or envious competition, were altogether banished from human society; that the emotions, at all times delightful, of good-will on the one side, were eve and anon calling the emotions no less de lightful of gratitude back again; tha truth and tenderness hold their secur abode in every family; and, on stepping forth among the wider companionship of life, that each could confidently rejoic in every one he met with as a brothe and a friend—we ask if on this simpl change, a change you will observe in th *morale* of humanity, though winte should repeat its storms as heretofore, an every element of nature were to abide un altered—yet, in virtue of a process and revolution altogether mental, would no our millennium have begun, and a heav en on earth be realized? Now let thi contemplation be borne aloft, as it were to the upper sanctuary, where we ar told there are the spirits of just men mad perfect, or where those who were onc the righteous on earth are righteous still Let it be remembered, that nothing is ad mitted there, which worketh wickednes or maketh a lie; and that therefore, wit every feculence of evil detached and dis severed from the mass, there is nough in heaven but the pure the transparen element of goodness—its unbounded love its tried and unalterable faithfulness, i confiding sincerity. Think of the ex pressive designation given to it in the B ble, the land of uprightness. Above a think, that, revealed in visible glory, th righteous God, who loveth righteousnes there sitteth upon His throne, in th midst of a rejoicing family—Himself r joicing over them, because, formed in H own likeness, they love what He love they rejoice in what He rejoices. Ther may be palms of triumph; there may b crowns of unfading lustre; there may b pavements of emerald, and rivers of plea ure, and groves of surpassing lovelines and palaces of delight, and high arch in heaven which ring with sweetest me ody—but, mainly and essentially, it is moral glory which is lighted up there it is virtue which blooms and is immort there; it is the goodness by which th spirits of the holy are regulated here, it this which forms the beatitude of eternit The righteous now, who, when they d and rise again, shall be righteous sti have heaven already in their bosom and when they enter within its porta they carry the very being and substan

of its blessedness along with them—the character which, is itself the whole of heaven's worth, the character which is the very essence of heaven's enjoyments. "Let him that is holy, be holy still." The two clauses descriptive of the character in the place of celestial blessedness, are counterparts to the clauses descriptive of the character in the place of infernal woe. He that is righteous in the one stands contrasted with him that is unjust in the other. He that is holy in the one stands contrasted with him that is licentious in the other. But we would have you attend to the full extent and significance of the term "holy." It is not abstinence from the outward deeds of profligacy alone. It is not a mere recoil from impurity in action. It is a recoil from impurity in thought. It is that quick and sensitive delicacy to which even the very conception of evil is offensive—a virtue which has its residence within; which takes guardianship of the heart, as of a citadel or unviolated sanctuary in which no wrong or worthless imagination is permitted to dwell. It is not purity of action that is all which we contend for. It is exalted purity of sentiment—the ethereal purity of the third heavens, which, if once settled in the heart, brings the peace and the triumph and the unutterable serenity of heaven along with it. In the maintenance of this, there is a curious elevation; there is the complacency, we had almost said the pride, of a great moral victory over the infirmities of an earthly and accursed nature; there is a health and harmony to the soul; a beauty of holiness, which, though it effloresces on the countenance and the manner and the outward path, is itself so thoroughly internal, as to make purity of heart the most distinctive evidence of a work of grace in time, the most distinct and decisive evidence of a character that is ripening and expanding for the glories of eternity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see God." "Into the holy city nothing which defileth or worketh an abomination shall enter." These are distinct and decisive passages, and point to that consecrated way, through which alone, the gate of heaven is opened to us. On this subject, there is a remarkable harmony, between the didactic sayings of various books in the New Testament, and the descriptive scenes which are laid before us in the book of Revelations. However partial and imperfect the glimpses there afforded of heaven may be, one thing is palpable as day, that holiness is its very atmosphere. It is the only element which its inmates breathe, and which it is their supreme and ineffable delight to breathe in. They luxuriate therein, as in their best-loved and most congenial element. Holiness is their oil of gladness—the elixir, if we may use the expression, the moral elixir of glorified spirits. And in their joyful hosannas, whether of "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," or of "Just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints," we may read, that, as virtue in the Godhead is the theme of their adoration, so virtue in themselves is the very treasure they have laid up in heaven—the wealth, as well as the ornament, of their now celestial natures.

We would once more advert to a prevalent delusion that obtains in society. We are aware of nothing more ruinous, than the acquiescence of whole multitudes in a low standard of qualifications for Heaven. The distinct aim is to be righteous now, that, after the death and the resurrection you may be righteous still—to be holy now, that you may be holy still. But hold it not enough, that you are free from the dishonesties which would forfeit the mere respect and confidence of the world or from the profligacies which even the world itself would hold to be disgraceful. There is a certain amount of morality, which is in demand upon earth, but which is miserably short of the requisite preparation for Heaven—the holiness indispensable there, is a universal an unspotted and withal a mental and spiritual holiness. It is this which distinguishes the morality of a regenerated and aspiring saint, from the morality of a respectable citizen, who still is but a citizen of the world, with his conversation not in heaven, with neither his heart nor his treasure there. The righteous of our text would recoil from the least act of unfaithfulness, from being unfaithful in the least as from being unfaithful in much. The holy of our text would shrink in sensitive aversion and alarm from the first approaches of evil,

from the incipient contaminations of thought and fancy and feeling, as from the foul and final contaminations of the outward history. Both are diligent to be found of Christ without spot and blameless, in the great day of account—glorifying the Lord with their soul and spirit, as well as with their bodies—aspiring after those graces, which, unseen by every earthly eye, belong to the hidden man of the heart, and in the sight of heaven are of great price—and so proceeding onward from strength to strength on this lofty path of obedience, till they appear perfect before God in Zion.

We feel that we have not nearly exhausted the subject of our text, by these brief and almost miscellaneous observations. The truth is, it is a great deal too unwieldy for any single address, and we shall therefore conclude with the notice of one specimen that might be alleged for the importance of the view that we have just given in purging theology from error. If the moral character then of these future states of existence, were distinctly understood and consistently applied, it would serve directly and decisively to extinguish antinomianism. It would in fact reduce that heresy to a contradiction in terms. There is no sound and scriptural Christian, who ever thinks of virtue as the price of heaven. It is something a great deal higher, it is heaven itself—the very essence, as we have already said, of heaven's blessedness. It occupies therefore a much higher place than the secondary and the subordinate one, ascribed to it even by many of the writers termed evangelical—who view it mainly as a token or an evidence that heaven will be ours. Instead of which it is the very substance of heaven—a sample on hand of the identical good, which, in larger measure and purer quality, is afterwards awaiting us—an entrance on the path which leads to heaven; or rather an actual lodgement of ourselves within that line of demarcation which separates the heaven of the New Testament from the hell of the New Testament. For heaven is not so much a locality as a character; and we, by a moral transition from the old to the new character, have in fact crossed the threshold, and are now rejoicing within the confines of God's spiritual family.

By the doctrine of justification through faith, we understand that Christ purchased our right of admittance into heaven—or opened its door for us. Is there aught antinomian in this? The obstacle, the legal obstacle, between us and a life of prosperous and never-ending virtue, is now broken down; and is it upon that event, that we are to relinquish the path which has just been opened to welcome and invite our advancing footsteps? The doctrine of justification by faith is not an obstacle to virtue—it is but an introduction to it. It is in truth the removal of an obstacle—the unfastening of that drag which before held us in apathy and despair; and restrained us from breaking forth on that career of obedience, in which, with the hope of glory before us, we purify ourselves even as Christ is pure. The purpose of His death was not to supersede, but to stimulate our obedience. "He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The object of His promises is not to lull our indolence, but rouse us to activity. "Having received these promises therefore, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

We expatiate no further; but shall be happy, if, as the fruit of these imperfect observations, you can be made to recognise how distinctly practical a business the work of Christianity is. It is simply to destroy one character, and to build up another in its room; to resist the temptations which vitiate and debase, and make all the graces and moralities which enter into the composition of perfect virtue the objects of our most strenuous cultivation. In the expediting of this mighty transformation, on the completion of which there hinges our eternity, we have need of believing prayer; a thorough renunciation of all dependence on our own strength; a thorough reliance on the proffered strength and aid of the upper sanctuary; a deep sense of our infirmities, and constant application for that Spirit who has promised to help them—that, in the language of the Apostle we may strive mightily, according to the grace which worketh in us mightily.

SERMON XLIII.

Light in Darkness.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CONVOCATION OF MINISTERS IN EDINBURGH.

"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."—PSALM. CXII. 4.

The great lesson in this text is the connection which obtains between integrity of purpose and clearness of perception—insomuch that a duteous conformity to what is right, is generally followed up by a ready and luminous discernment of what is true. It tells us that if we have but grace to do as we ought, we shall be made to see as we ought; or, in other words, that, if right morally, we are in the high way of becoming right intellectually. This great lesson of a connection between the right and the true—of a strong reciprocal influence between the heart on the one hand, and the understanding on the other—of an action and reaction between the moral and intellectual departments of our nature. We say of this, that it is a lesson repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, and that in various places both of the Old and the New Testament. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "Righteousness keepeth the upright in the way." "Light is sown for the righteous." Or, still more specifically—"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant." To the same purpose there is that magnificent passage in Isaiah, where he tells the Israelites of those acts of charity and uprightness which form an acceptable fast unto the Lord, and after the enumeration of which, he makes the moral effloresce thus into the intellectual—"And then shall his light break forth as the morning, and the glory of the Lord shall be his reward, and the Lord shall guide him continually." We have repeated averments to the like effect in the New Testament. "If thine eye be single"—that is, not vacillating doubly and ambiguously between God and the world, between a treasure on earth and a treasure in heaven; but, instead of this, if it be singly and devotedly intent on the one thing needful—"if thine eye be thus single, thy whole body shall be full of light." To the same purpose we are told by the Saviour, "If a man hath my commandments and keepeth them, to him will I manifest myself." All proving a relationship, in the order of cause and effect, between our being led to do aright and our being made to discern aright; or, in other words, all proving that the commandment of the Lord has not only the property of guiding the footsteps, but also of enlightening the eyes.

And before proceeding further, we may as well exhibit a few of those passages, which lay before us the reverse process of a connection between disobedience and spiritual darkness, in counterpart to the connection between obedience and spiritual discernment. "The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble." If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." It is because their deeds are evil that they love the darkness, and so are enveloped therein. The frightful progress of degeneracy, as represented in the first chapter of the Romans, is but a series of descending steps from darkness to a more sunken and abandoned vice; and, reciprocally, from vice to a more hopeless and profound darkness. He that lacketh the virtues of the gospel, says Peter, is blind, and cannot see afar off. He that hateth his brother, says John, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes—all evidences which might be multiplied tenfold, of the close and powerful reciprocity which obtains between these two elements, the will and the understanding—insomuch that either a rectitude or an obliquity in the one, will lead to a like rectitude and a like perversity in the other also.

This remarkable, and certainly most

important mental phenomenon, if it may be so called, admits of a twofold explanation—one a natural, another a Christian explanation. In attempting to lay down the former, we might, if we had the time for it, and were this the place for philosophising in such a walk of inquiry, we might expatiate both on the darkening and the illuminating processes; and tell what the laws or what the tendencies of mind, which were concerned in them. We could, perhaps, in the first place have demonstrated wherein lay the sophistry of evil affections; and how it is that if, in virtue of their lawless usurpation, conscience is for a time disposted from her supremacy—the objects of mental vision are distorted thereby, and seen in an inverted order or seen out of their places. We might thus have made palpable the darkening and disturbing influence of a moral anarchy, so as to disqualify for right perceptions; and to overcloud, if we may term it, the panorama of the soul, or whole region of its contemplations. And on the other hand, we believe it could be made manifest, why the element of moral rectitude becomes also an element or medium of intellectual transparency—insomuch, that if right principles are in play, such is the mechanism of our spiritual nature, right perceptions will come in the train of them; and that in virtue of our moral or spiritual well-being, we see things in a truer perspective, and with a larger command over the domain of human thought. Some have carried this speculation so far, and maintained such to be the connection between righteouness and truth, or such the connection between a clear conscience and a clear intellect, that its influence is felt even in the investigations of physical science; and that at all events it is of paramount efficacy in the guidance and enlightenment of the mind, when treating of moral and practical questions.

It is obvious that this is a topic on which we cannot here dwell, and will therefore hasten onward to our Christian explanation of the phenomenon in question; and which we thus term only for the purpose of distinction, because there is no discrepancy between it and the natural explanation. There is in truth a marvellous harmony between the economy of nature and the economy of grace; and though it be the Spirit of God who is the undoubted author of all that distinguishes the children of light from the children of this world, yet it will generally be found, we believe, that even at the very time when He works most influentially, and with greatest power in the heart of man, He does it without violence, and so as not to overbear the laws of the human spirit, or any of the processes of our mental philosophy. But neither can we linger at this topic; and will therefore at once state what we hold to be the real ligament of connection between the uprightness of our text and the light which ariseth out of darkness. The link of concatenation then which binds together these two elements—the intervening power who makes sure the connection between them—is this same Spirit of God, who will not suffer the upright to walk in darkness, but will guide him to all needful truth; and more particularly, when beset with perplexities on every side, and uncertain where to turn, this beneficent agent opens a way for him to walk in—and, causing the word of God to shine upon all the intricacies which are before him, makes it a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. For observe the functions ascribed to the Spirit of God throughout the Bible. These are exceedingly various; for, Author as He is of every good and every perfect gift, He adapts His ministrations to all the moral and all the mental exigencies of our nature. He at one time inspires the purposes of integrity, and gives strength for the execution of them; and at another he operates on the understandings of men—causing them to apprehend aright, not only in the general that truth which is unto salvation; but, helping them in every time of need, teaches how to strike out the path of wisdom and of duty amid the difficulties with which they are encompassed. Consider Him then as the fountain both of our light and of our strength; and couple with this the undoubted Scripture information, that, in dealing with the spirits of men, He, personal agent as He is, is personally affected by our treatment of Himself, and more particularly by the use we make, be it faithful or unfaithful, of the gifts he may have been pleased to bestow on us—at one time grieved, resisted,

finally quenched, nay at length provoked to abandon us forever, either when we act not up to the light He hath imparted, or when we fail in being so diligent and laborious as we ought with the strength He has imparted—at another time pleased and encouraged, just as a master is with the docility of his pupils, when we do all we might and all we ought either with the power wherewith He enables us to obey, or with the light whereby He enables us to discern, and so follows it up both with larger powers and larger manifestations—thus fulfilling His own declarations that he who hath to him more shall be given; but from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath—and more especially this most pregnant and precious deliverance, that the Holy Ghost shall be given to those who obey Him. It is thus that He conducts us onward from the humbler to the higher lessons of this His moral and spiritual discipline. And it is this peculiar economy of His, this system of moral penalties and rewards if it may be so termed, which establishes the connection between disobedience and spiritual darkness on the one hand, between obedience and spiritual discernment on the other. With this explanation of the method by which these two elements act and react into each other's hands, we should be at no loss to understand how it is, that if made to do aright, we are also made to see aright—how it is that to the upright a light ariseth out of darkness; and that a guidance as well as a glory from the Lord is made to shine upon all their ways.

And what completes this solution, and carries it onward to effect and fulfilment, is that the Holy Spirit is given to our prayers. If we are indeed in earnest—if it is our single-minded and our intense desire to be as God would have us and to do as God would have us—if the supreme moral ambition by which these bosoms of ours are actuated is to be right, striving with all honesty both to find out the will of our heavenly Master and to do it. These longings and aspirations of the soul will vent themselves in prayer; and, this being the prayer not of the hypocrite which is His abomination, but of the upright, and so His delight, will be followed up by the glorious verification of His own assurances to His own children—helpless without His aid, and so ever keeping by Him, and cleaving to Him as all their dependence and all their desire. More especially let me single out this assurance, the most comforting of all to those who are in perplexity—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Before proceeding to any special application of the doctrine which has now been propounded, let me, with all possible brevity, interpose two general observations.

First, then, let us observe of evangelical Christianity, which many regard as exclusively a doctrinal, how pre-eminently and emphatically we might say of it that it is a practical system. In this system, doctrine and practice are most intimately blended. And it is not saying all for this to say that the doctrine supplies the motives and the considerations which impel to practice. There is more in it than this. Practice by a sort of reflex influence casts back a light on the principles which gave it birth; and so, as if not to discover, at least to irradiate the doctrine into brighter manifestation. The two influences have a reciprocating virtue, the one on the other; and so change places as, in the language of science, to become antecedents and consequents alternately, and they are such alternate sequences as these which make out an historical progression in the life, and build up a resulting character in the state of a believer—the brighter faith ever germinating a holier practice, and the holier practice repaying the obligation by issuing in a clearer and more confirmed faith. It is the agency of God's Spirit, we again say, which resolves this mystery. He, the fountain of our strength, works in us both to will and to do; and if we, in obedience to His impulse and by His strength work out the bidden duties of the gospel, He, the fountain of our light, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to our souls, sheds a more vivid illumina-

tion than before on the doctrines of the gospel It is thus that faith and works which are made to stand in such a controversial attitude to each other as described in the pages of authorship, when realized on the living man, meet together in fullest consent and harmony. When brought into actual co-operation, they are found not to be conflicting but conspiring forces. They grow with each other's growth, they strengthen with each other's strength.

But secondly, this most beautiful and beneficent law, by which the conscience and understanding are so related to each other, that the latter is all the more spiritually enlightened in things doctrinal, in proportion as the former is obeyed in things practical and moral—it is a law which meets with its daily exemplifications in the high and hidden walks of Christian experience. We can only afford to mention two specimens of this. The first is that of Augustine at the commencement of his Christianity, who for years had groped in darkness and deepest spiritual distress after the truth as it is in Jesus—seeking for peace with God and finding none, and making a thousand fruitless and fatiguing efforts to force the barrier, which intercepted from the view of his mind the mercies of the gospel. The truth is, he had long been the bondsman of one of those degrading affections which war against the soul—a tyrant appetite which not only enslaved but darkened him. So long as the passion retained its mastery did the understanding remain overclouded, and not till after many a weary struggle he resolved with full effect on the conclusive sacrifice, did he break loose from the imprisonment which held him. No sooner was he emancipated from the thraldom of a forbidden pleasure, than his whole faculties, as if by the removal of a stricture, were set at liberty; and the same Spirit who strengthened him for the moral conquest over a besetting sin, ushered him into the light of a glorious manifestation. When the chains of a most degrading bondage fell from his person, then the scales fell from his eyes. This is the real substance of church history; and it most strikingly corroborates the lesson of our text, when we find in the case of Augustine, that a great practical achievement and a great doctrinal enlargement went hand in hand—insomuch that it may be said of this noblest champion of orthodoxy in ancient times, that, contemporaneously with his most strenuous performance of a thing essential to be done, was his at length clear and confident perception of a thing essential to be believed; and it forms indeed a magnificent illustration of the harmony between faith and works, that on the moment when the Spirit enabled him for an indispensable act of personal righteousness, did he reveal the imputed righteousness of Christ as the alone ground of a sinner's justification, and which henceforth became the rest and the rejoicing of his soul.

Our second specimen is that of a Christian in modern times, alike eminent with Augustine in the highest fields both of Christian experience and Christian authorship—we mean Jonathan Edwards, of America, who tells us in his most instructive diary, as the general result of all his experience, that his seasons of greatest temptation, and which therefore when overcome gave birth to the greatest of his moral victories, were followed up by his seasons of brightest illumination; and that never were his views both of duty and of doctrine more transparent and exhilarating, than when carried in triumph through those more arduous contests of principle, which overbear the almost, but which serve the more to confirm and to elevate and to signalize the altogether Christian.

But we must now be done with these generalities, on which we never should have ventured to give so bare an outline, so brief and synoptical a view from the pulpit, were it not for the audience of able and accomplished theologians now before me, who know well how to fill up the deficiencies of our rapid and imperfect sketch; and, aware of the extreme difficulty which attends the compression of much within little room, will I am sure award to me their indulgence, and that in very proportion to their intelligence in these things. We now proceed then to our special applications, premising in one sentence that the light which follows in the train of uprightness, is not always that general or doctrinal light which may be termed the light of salvation—but,

more specifically, that light which shows to an inquirer when in perplexity, the path in which he should walk. It is a common proverb, that where there is a will there is a way, and the lesson on which we are now to build the few observations which it remains for us to make, may be regarded as the exaltation of this proverb, or if you will, the religious version of it. And the lesson is shortly this—that if it be your intent and resolved will in the face of every trial, to do what is right in the sight of God, God will open up a way for you. It is a lesson in perfect keeping with that most important verse, that if any is willing to do the will of God, he shall know of Christ's doctrine whether it be of God. In other words, he who willeth aright shall be made to know aright.

In order then that our text may be brought to bear with effect on your present circumstances, we should attend to what the darkness is in which you are now involved; and what the light is which, if made to arise, would clear it away. There is one very obvious cause of difficulty, and so of darkness in any question, whether of wisdom or duty; and that is when, made up of various elements, the solution of it hinges, not on a single but on several, nay perhaps on many considerations. The well known effect of complication is to obscure any subject, and so it may be as to make the treatment of it tenfold more arduous and unmanageable than before. This holds true even of such topics as are purely intellectual; and there is no class of profound thinkers more thoroughly aware of it, than those who have laboured and with most success on the high walk of the physical and mathematical sciences. One of the best examples that can be given is the problem of the three bodies. It is comparatively an easy task to calculate the path of the earth's movements—when, having only to do with two bodies, you view it as acted upon only by its gravitation to the sun; but it has a gravitation also towards the moon, and it is not to be told how much the introduction of this new element has added to the difficulty of the task. And the difficulty is enhanced in a rapidly increasing and multiple ratio, if you admit more forces into the computation; or take into your reckoning one planetary influence after another, and so as to require at each of these successive stretches a fresh draught on a still higher and more recondite calculus than before—till far out of sight and lost to the eye of the general world, the whole speculation to ordinary minds becomes utterly inextricable.

Now if there is something so very baffling in the mere complexity of a subject, what it may well be thought can be so utterly hopeless, than that we shall come to a clear and satisfactory determination on our own church question—a question which, if not made up, has at least been mixed up with many and diverse elements. We are first told of the Bibles as being the great statute-book of heaven, and of the paramount authority which belongs to its requirements; but this has been brought into comparison, nay into conflict, with a statute-book on earth—that we mean of the civil government under which we live; and in that oft-repeated watch-word, the law of the land, we are told of the authority which belongs to its requirements. Then we are told of the duty we owe to God, as being our first and greatest obligation; but to honour the king and to obey magistrates—these also are duties, graven and inscribed as heaven's own laws on the tablet of revelation. Next we are told of religious liberty, or liberty in things ecclesiastical, as being the inviolable birth-right of every Christian; but we further hear that for the sake of its advantages, we have consented to the terms of a National Establishment—and then the relations of Church and State come into play, and serve if not to perplex, at least mightily to complicate the argument. And then to bring our instances to a close, of which we have only selected a few without nearly exhausting them, we may often listen to a learned discourse on temporalities and spiritualities, and the line of demarcation between them; and if we are not presented by this with any new conception, at least a new nomenclature has been brought to our ears—fitted, were it for nothing else, to throw a deeper disguise over the question, and still more to impress thousands with the conviction, that altogether it is a question which is too many for them. Certain it is that such

a confession is often heard to escape from the lips of those innumerable talkers upon this most engrossing at present of all subjects. They candidly admit that they have not a head for it; and so the conviction grows apace throughout that numerous class of society, who think but cursorily and superficially on every question, that ours is indeed the most helpless and irreducible of all speculations.

But while such is the aspect which our question bears to the precipitate and the careless, let me not be understood to represent it as so very recondite, so very inaccessible, that, were but the attention fully given, one even of an ordinary mind might not find his way through it. The truth is that there might be the semblance of a collision between various duties, and yet notwithstanding a decisive and clear path. For example, it is the indispensable duty of every Christian to be pure, and it is his duty to be peaceable. If it be possible as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men. But it may so happen that the maintenance of these two virtues, the graces of purity and peace, at the same time or on the same occasion, might not be possible. But the scriptural deliverance of first pure and then peaceable, here interposes its authoritative sanction, and relieves us from all ambiguity. In like manner the supreme, the indispensable duty of every creature is to obey God. But it is the duty of every subject to obey magistrates, and this too is the oft-repeated injunction of the New Testament. But there may, as systematically and for whole generations together in the primitive ages of our faith; and there may, as incidentally and for these few years back in our own land, be a collision between these two authorities—when as before the perplexity is again cut short by the scriptural saying, We ought to obey God rather than man. Here comes in one grand principle which simplifies all because it subordinates all; and, like the rod of Aaron, swallows up the rods of the magicians. Thus it is that one great virtue of central and presiding authority over the rest, has borne our church through her hitherto upright and consistent way, in the midst of every attempt to seduce or to frighten her sons from their propriety; nor has it yet been given to all the skill and machinations of her adversaries, to enchant her from the path of allegiance to her God.

But the darkness of which I have hitherto spoken—that proceeding from the complexity alone of any given question, and presenting but an intellectual difficulty in the way of its solution—may be overcome by dint of a more stedfast and persevering attention, or more vigorous appliance than before of the merely intellectual powers. But there is another sort of darkness, proceeding from a wholly distinct source, and only to be overcome in another way—we mean the darkness which gathers over a question on which our own personal interest is suspended, and where the judgment of man is apt to be blinded and bewildered by that most deceitful of all sophistry, the sophistry of his own affections—when in balancing between two terms of an alternative self intervenes with its mighty and preponderating bias, and turns the scale against the whole weight of reason and conscience on the other side; or, to express it otherwise, when the objects of deliberation are seen through a medium of selfishness, and though not complicated, are at least mightily bedimmed and distorted thereby. It is the darkness thus originated which our text has properly to do with, because a darkness which for the dispersion of it needs not so much an intellectual as a moral counteractive. It is obviously that sort of darkness which integrity of heart and of purpose is fitted to dispel—a darkness you will observe which settles and sits fast on the minds of the sordid and the fearful; but which vanishes and gives way before the untroubled eye of him, whose serene and single-minded purpose it is to be as he ought, and to do as he ought.

And now my venerable fathers and brethren of the Established Church of Scotland, I will not speak of it as a certainty, that if you persevere in the high walk of uprightness on which you have entered, the secularities of that Establishment will be wrested from your hands. It would not be venturing far however to speak of it as a probability, and a hazard; and surely, at the very least, not to speak of it as a possibility were downright affectation. In this its lowest and least appalling form, you have been in the habit of regarding it for years; and even when

a crisis was obviously drawing nearer, and the symptoms of some great and approaching overthrow looked more menacing than before—let the majorities of our church attest whether they have been the calculations of worldly prudence, or the high behests of principle, which had the ascendant over you. And still I rejoice to believe, that, whatever be the shades or diversities of sentiment upon lesser questions, the tie of that great and common principle which hitherto has bound us together remains unbroken—that I speak in the hearing of men firmly resolved as ever to lose all and to suffer all, rather than surrender the birth-right of those prerogatives which we inherit from our fathers, or compromise the sacred liberty wherewith Christ has made us free—of men whose paramount question is what is duty, that best stepping-stone to the solution of the other question, what is wisdom. For it is when in this spirit of uprightness, this blessed frame of simplicity and godly sincerity, that light is made to arise, and Wisdom is justified of her children.

This is not the place for attempting any specific delineation of the path which wisdom prescribes in our present eventful circumstances; nor will I utter one word that might indicate my opinion or even my leanings on the question, of what specifically and practically the church at present ought to do. But surely this is the place for urging both on myself and others, the moral preparation which all experience demonstrates to have an enlightening effect upon the understanding, and all Scripture affirms to be of sovereign efficacy in bringing down the Spirit of wisdom from above. This has been the object of your prayers; and it is the identical object, however feeble in execution, of our preaching. The great lesson of our text is, that if we purpose aright, we shall be made to see aright; and that the integrity of our wills shall be followed up by light in the understandings. God will not abandon to darkness those who cast their care and their confidence upon Himself; and who can say with the apostle—He is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me. The man who can lift this honest and unfaltering prayer—Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting—the man who can say this fearlessly, has nothing else to fear. God will establish the just—for it is said the righteous God trieth the heart and reins. Commit then thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. It is He who by the light of his Holy Spirit makes good the connection between singleness of purpose and wisdom of conduct; and thus I understand the text, that He maketh wise the simple, and giveth understanding to the simple. Ye men of God, who make the Bible the supreme directory of your hearts and consciences, you will not be long left in uncertainty. He will make your way clear and open before you.—If before Him we come with the docility of little children, He will cause us in understanding to be men. He that is spiritual judgeth all things; and though, because himself judged of no man, he may be the object of derision and contempt to a world that does not comprehend him—yet if thou commit thy way unto the Lord and trust also to Him, He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?—Though a host should encamp against me my heart shall not fear. Though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident. For in the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall he hide me. He shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy: I will sing, yea I will sing praises to the Lord.

SERMON XLIV.

The Outward Business of the House of God.

A SERMON PREACHED AT GLASGOW, OCTOBER 16, 1843.

"And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God."—NEHEMIAH, xi. 16.

THE outward business of the house of God is of chief necessity and importance at the commencement of a Church, or at some of those great changes and enlargements which it is often made to undergo. At the outset of the Jewish Church, beside the regulations for the maintenance of the priesthood and distribution of the various offices, we read much of the time and labour expended on the structure of the tabernacle. The same thing might be observed on the occasion of great enlargements, or revivals, or deliverances,—as at the rearing and successive great repairs of the temple in Jerusalem; and more noticeably still in the doings of Ezra and Nehemiah, on their return from their captivity, and the re-establishment both of their national and sacred polity. At the commencement, too, of the Christian Church, he who was the most gifted of its apostles—though pre-eminently a man of faith and prayer, and perhaps the most conversant among them in the vitalities of that high and hidden walk which constitutes the new obedience of the gospel—still did he busy himself most of all with the matters of a mere external regulation, as journeys and collections, and the various questions of Church government and Church order. And descending from these primitive to later and uninspired times, where shall we find a more striking exemplification of the same union, than among the fathers of our own Church? We mean the devotedness of their piety as combined with the varied and profound wisdom of their economics. Had their conceptions all been realized, on the subject of schools and colleges, and a provision for the poor, as well as the various parts and offices of our great ecclesiastical institute, never, perhaps, was a more goodly apparatus devised, not for the Christian instruction alone, but for the moral, nay for the civil and secular well-being of the people in any land. Though these conceptions were not realised, though they were frustrated by the resistance of men in power, and by the unprincipled rapacity of the nobles in these days—this should not prevent us from doing homage to the conceptions themselves, as having been fraught with all the wisdom of experience, and of profoundest skill in the management, we could even say the philosophy, of human affairs.

Let us, therefore take a lesson from these great master spirits of a former age. Their spirituality did not so monopolise them, as to dispossess from their minds all value for the matters of external regulation, or cause them to under-rate as an object unworthy of their most earnest attention the outward business of the house of God. Bishop Butler has written a sermon, the least known of his works, on the use of externals in religion. But his topic is not exactly ours; for what he philosophises on is chiefly the influence of form, and ceremony, and music, and investiture, and such other visible accompaniments, on the devotional feelings of a worshipper. This is not just our subject, which relates more to the polity and plat or platform of a Church as distinguished from its doctrine, and from all that discipline which has to do with the moral and religious state of those who partake in its ordinances. The outward forms are not altogether the same with the outward business of the house of God.

Yet the inward should take precedency of the outward, both in the order of influence and in the order of time. And it was, we trust, the force of a strong inward sentiment which led to our recent memorable disruption from the now Enthralled, and the consequent formation of the Free Church of Scotland. It was an inward and a right spirit, we hope,

which animated the devotions and the doings of its First General Assembly. It has, we are confidently persuaded, been an inward principle all along, which has borne up her ministers in the midst of their painful surrenders and arduous services; and which, most difficult of all, has hitherto maintained amongst them all the charities of a substantial harmony and peace; and that, too, when engaged with such hazardous and exciting topics, as on the arena of an earthly politics, would have stirred up all the passions of a fierce and heated partizanship. But the inward principle should not prevent, nay the very strength of it will prompt us onward to the outward business of the house of God. To these it falls, necessarily and naturally, that we should now address ourselves. It will form a main object in our present Assembly; and it is for this reason that I have selected our text, and propose to found upon it some remarks on the importance of such other things as are to come under the deliberative wisdom of my Fathers and Brethren, and on their subserviency to that spiritual religion, which, not as a main ingredient only, but in its very substance and being, forms the great staple or element in the vital prosperity of a Church.

First, then, there is nothing in the doctrine of a spiritual influence, or in the undoubted position that whatever is good or true in religion is the product of the Holy Spirit's operation—there is nothing in all this which supersedes the importance or the uses of an external machinery, the setting up of which and the working of which belong to the outward business of the house of God. It is very true that no man is savingly enlightened in the doctrines of the Gospel, or strengthened and enabled for the performance of its duties, but by the demonstration and power of the Spirit upon his soul. Yet, as it is only through the Bible that He enlightens, opening our eyes to behold the wondrous things contained in this book; and as when He works in man to will and to do, and so to set him a-working, still it is by giving enforcement and effect to the lessons of this said Bible—there is positively nothing in the doctrine of a celestial agency which should at all set aside the terrestrial operation of multiplying and disseminating by thousands of copies the Word of God, which can only be done by means of these very outward things, the construction of printing presses. And what is true of the word read in private is alike true of the word spoken in public, that it only takes effect when the Spirit sends it home; but this requires that men should not forsake the assembling of themselves together, and so requires another preparation of outward things—even the erection of numerous churches all over the land. Our Saviour after his resurrection bade the apostles go to Jerusalem, and wait there till they should be endued with power from on high; or, in other words, there was a certain outward thing which they were told to do, ere the inward grace or inward illumination could be conferred upon them. The doctrine of a supernatural influence from heaven above did not supersede, nay, it required a given natural performance beforehand on the earth below, even that of bending their footsteps to the place which the Saviour's precept pointed out, and where the Saviour's promise was to be fulfilled upon them. And still there are not only certain prescribed performances, but certain appointed places of meeting between the Spirit of God and the spirit of men; and, to make out the co-operation which this implies, man has to work outwardly, and with the powers of his body, while God works inwardly on the functions and faculties of his soul. One of these places is the Bible, which it is our part duteously and diligently to read and give earnest heed unto—aye and until the day dawns and the day-star arises in our hearts, even by God opening our eyes to behold the wondrous things contained in His law. Another of these places is the church, where we are bidden assemble ourselves together, even as Cornelius was bidden hold a church in his house, that both he and his family might hear the words of Peter; and, as then, so now, it is while the minister is in the act of speaking that the Holy Ghost often falls on the earnest and attentive listener when in the act of hearing. We must not slight the natural performance, though of no value singly or apart, or without the supernatural endowment; and still less when the one is the prescribed road to the other—even as the apostles when on the road to Jeru-

salem were on the road to the high and heavenly illuminations of the day of Pentecost. And, yet, when doing these things, it is with outward things that we are engaged in the doing of; and, so also, when laying down the forms, and the processes, and the offices of a church, in obedience to the commandment of Him who says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Had the apostles disobeyed, and not gone to Jerusalem, they would have waited in vain at any other than the bidden place for the illuminations of Pentecost. And should we neglect either our reading of the Bible, or our acts of attendance on the house of prayer, we have no reason to expect that in any other than such bidden ways will the Spirit of God descend upon our souls. And thus, too, it is, that should the guides and the rulers of our ecclesiastical polity fail in providing either a right scriptural education, or the services of a rightly ordered church for the people of the land—outward things as schools and churches are, and outward business as it is to build up a framework or construct a directory of public worship; yet if these things are not done, and done rightly, a spiritual barrenness might otherwise rest upon our territory, and our else fertile land, by the showers of grace being withheld from it, might, in the spiritual sense of the term, remain a dreary and desolate wilderness.

Let it not therefore be said of these views that they go to materialise religion. On the contrary it is our direct aim to spiritualise it—as much so as it was that of the Apostles when they performed the outward thing of going up to Jerusalem with the object of waiting there till they should be endued with power from on high—or as much so as the devout and desirous reader of his Bible, who, while engaged and persevering in this outward exercise, gives earnest heed thereunto, till the day dawn and the day-star arise in his heart. Did we stop short at the routine of mechanical observance of these things, this would be to materialise religion; but this we leave to wretched Puseyism when satisfied with the *opus operatum*, after having acquitted its repetitions on the service-book, or its genuflections before the illuminated altar. Our churches and sacraments are not the resting places of a deceitful security—but our watch-towers whence we look for a blessing from on high, our meeting-places with God whom it is our part to worship, not with idle prostrations or in an empty superstitious reverence for places and forms, but to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The irrigations of Egypt do not terminate in themselves. They have respect to the overflowing of the Nile; and without a descent from above, they would prove but an empty apparatus of dry and deserted channels through which nothing passed to fertilise the now barren territory. Yet who will deny the good of these irrigations, or the perfect rationality of the object which the cultivators of the soil there have in the construction of them? And the same holds true of our ecclesiastical apparatus, whether it be of church-buildings, or church forms, or church offices—of absolute nothingness in themselves, an unmeaning system of empty tubes or naked architecture, without the blessing from on high, without the descent of living water from the upper Sanctuary. But who on this account should dispute the worth, the rational, enlightened, nay spiritual purpose of such a machinery as this—or who should undervalue either the outward framework or outward business of the house of God? Only let us look beyond and above all that is visible or external; and with as intent and wistful an eye as that wherewith the people of Egypt gaze upon their tutelary river and watch its elevations—so let us never cease from our attitude of expectancy and dependence upon Him who is the Fountain of living waters, but ever pray to the Father of every good and perfect gift that He would breathe into the framework set up by human hands, and which but for Him were a lifeless skeleton, that He would cause its dry bones to live.

Let us trust therefore that we have now sufficiently reconciled even the most spiritual of our hearers to the outward business of the house of God, by making it palpable that means and machinery in religion, while utterly worthless as a substitute, may be of the uttermost worth and importance as a help to the life of God in the souls of men—deriving in fact their principal if not all their value from their subserviency to this high and noble end. Let me now conclude with

one or two illustrations applicable to the present exigencies attendant on the outset, and eminently conducive to a prosperous settlement in these lands of the Free Church of Scotland.

First then, we shall instance the proposed restoration of the ancient and useful order of Deacons in our ecclesiastical polity. We do not enter in detail at present on the nature of their official duties, though even this might not be a topic at all times unsuitable for the pulpit —seeing that the Apostle Paul (or rather the heavenly Agent who inspired him) in one of his epistles to Timothy, where he treats of the qualifications of applicants, and lays down rules for the distribution for the Church's alms, has deemed this very topic to be not unworthy of a place in the Bible. But we would rather dwell for a little on another and far higher benefit arising from the institution of a deaconship, and adverted to in Scripture when relating the first establishment of this economy in the Church. We are there told that the business, the proper and peculiar business of this order of men, fell at first into the hands of the Apostles; but that they wanted to be quit of it, and on this ground, that it was not reason for them to leave the word of God and to serve tables: And so seven honest men had to be chosen, on whom this service might be devolved, for the express purpose that the Apostles might give themselves wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Here you will at once perceive the direct subserviency of the outward to the spiritual—the use and the immediate effect of a merely external arrangement for the doing of an external work, in the enlargement of these two greatest and best of our spiritual ministrations, which are prayer and the preaching of the gospel. It relieved and disengaged the apostles, setting them free for the dedication of their entire strength and time to that work which is strictly apostolical. After a result so precious, let no man undervalue the worth and importance of outward things. Even the godliest of our ministers of Christ, they who have gained the loftiest ascents in the high and hidden walk of Christian experience, must no longer despise them —for so far, in this instance, from disturbing, or in aught diminishing that which was going on in the higher regions of the Church, these central and more sacred departments of the Church's business, these upper spheres of ecclesiastical labour were all the more replenished and quickened thereby.

It were in exact analogy with this high and scriptural example, did we plead for the revival of our deaconship, that the ministers of religion might be disburdened of all those secularities which ought never to have been accumulated upon their persons; and that, freed from all anxiety about the things of this life, they might prosecute without distraction the duties of their sacred calling, and give themselves wholly to the business of winning souls. But this we barely and briefly state, and shall not, at present, enlarge upon. We now bear respect to another class of men altogether. It is well known that the cessation of deacons in our church, by the transference of their duties to office-bearers of a higher degree, has secularised the work of the eldership. And, let us no longer undervalue even the spiritual importance of outward things, seeing that the restoration of this ancient order, and the reassumption by them of their own proper and original duties, might emancipate the higher functionaries for their higher labours, so that elders shall become what they were in purer and better days—fellow-workers with their pastors in the cure of souls, and important helps in the ministry of the gospel.

Now, look to the existing state of matters in our church, and see whether in the reformation for which we plead, there be not a most precious, and, at the same time, the most seasonable of all adaptations to the present exigency of our affairs. The number of ministers who have quitted the old establishment is four hundred and seventy. The number, I understand, of available probationers is about one hundred and thirty, who, after they have received ordination, will swell the account of ministers to six hundred in all. But the number of congregations already formed, or in progress towards this, is at least eight hundred—and this, too, a number never falling back, but subject to constant, almost daily accessions, had we only the means of an adequate supply, or a sufficiency of labourers

wherewith to meet the ever-growing demand for more full and frequent ministrations. Now, we do not want precipitately to enlarge the work of any of our office-bearers beyond their fitness, or even their inclination for the work. But would even so much only as one-tenth from among the several thousands of our elders so far conquer their diffidence as to come forward and help us in our present necessity—would they but venture on what very many of them are so well qualified to do, to conduct the public readings and devotions of our solemn assemblies—would they but thus keep together for a time our embryo congregations, fostering and carrying them forward till we had so far hastened the preparation of our students as to provide a commensurate supply of licentiates, and under the blessing of Him who is Lord of the harvest, to send forth enough of labourers in full equipment for the plenteous harvest of our vast and increasing population—Then so urgent, so growing is the disposition everywhere to pass over from the State-fettered to the Free Church of Scotland, that with but the extraordinary help for a few years of some hundreds in the eldership, we might convert, what will otherwise be a limited and partial, into a great national movement; and might thus be enabled, when in full possession of all the towns and almost all the parishes, to get up a pure and efficient gospel ministry for the great bulk of the families in our land.

Yet let it not be forgotten, that, even in the days of the New Testament, an apostle, and he the most abundant of them all in his spiritual ministrations, did charge himself with the produce of those collections, which were made by the richer disciples in one place, and designed for the relief of the poorer in another. And, in like manner, there is a fund made up of weekly gatherings, the contributions of men who give as God hath prospered them, of which we shall say nothing more particularly now, than that, instead of being intended for the supply of the temporal wants of any, the far higher aim of its distribution will be the supply of the spiritual wants of all our brethren; and so as that the blessing of a gospel ministry shall overspread the whole of Scotland, even to the most remote and destitute places of its territory, chequered as it is with all the varieties of human fortune, from lordly affluence, or prosperous and princely merchandise in one quarter, to extreme and helpless poverty in another. Surely when the object is so sacred, as an equal and full provision of the bread of life for all, the having to do with such a department of the Church's affairs is something more than having to do with the Church's secularities. There is so much of religiousness in the principle on which the contributors of this fund are led to give for its support and extension, and so much of what is strictly religious in the application of it, that we confess our desire to see it in some way associated with the functions of our eldership; and be it in order to stimulate its collectors by urging upon them the mighty importance and solemn responsibilities of their office, or to quicken and sustain, nay elevate the liberties of their respective districts, or finally to charge themselves with the custody and transmission of these sacred offerings —we feel as if there were a singular grace and good keeping and propriety in having the care and cognizance of an interest so precious committed to their hands. We would not, therefore, wholly dissever these high office-bearers, and next to the ministers of the gospel, from the management of the Church's alms, more especially from those alms which are set apart for the sustentation of the gospel ordinances throughout the country at large. They should be men of prayer, but not, therefore, disjoined from the business of charity, and in particular of that charity the offerings of which are consecrated to the support of the great Home Mission which labours in every part of our land for the good of human souls. The prayers of faith in company with such offerings will, like those of Cornelius, come up in memorial before God.

Ere I conclude, there is one general topic which I should like briefly to touch upon—relating to the machinery of our Church's business, and for which we have a sanction and a model in the New Testament. It is not a lesson respecting the duties of any one office, but a lesson grounded on the undoubted fact, that in the primitive Church, even as moulded

and fashioned by the hands of the Apostles themselves, there did obtain a great multiplicity of offices. Look at the construction of the Church in Corinth, with its goodly apparatus of offices and office-bearers—complex as the human body, to which, with its various members it has fitly been compared; and where all moved in perfect harmony, because each confined itself to its own functions, free of all disturbing interference, or of any inroad on the province of the others. It is not alone the skilful distribution of parts that we are called upon to admire; but what I would have you especially to notice is the recognition given here of a great principle, and which is applied by inspired men to ecclesiastical, even as it is by uninspired men to all other business—even the principle and philosophy of the division of labour. In the matters of ecclesiastical government, all Scripture is full of it. We find it as far back as in Jethro's advice to Moses. In the polity of the Old Testament Church, as exemplified in the very chapter from which our text is taken, the subdivision of employment seems to have been carried as far as possible. And also in the Church of the New Testament, its gifted Apostles, though largely and supernaturally endowed from on high, instead of taking all upon themselves, were glad to have the benefit of this principle. And accordingly what an array of distinct functions and distinct functionaries is set before us in the twelfth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. When we read there of a Church as made up of many helps, and diversities, and various members of a great and complex body politic, we cannot but be struck with the marvellous harmony which obtains between the harmony of grace and the harmony of Nature. On the one hand, we find that constitutionally and naturally there is an exceeding variety of talents and dispositions and particular aptitudes among men; and on the other hand, corresponding to this, we observe of the Spirit, that, in calling and qualifying men for their respective Church offices, He, instead of accumulating all his gifts upon one person, divided to every man severally as He will. There is here a lesson to ourselves—for this too, like all other Scripture, is written for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come. And the lesson seems obviously to be this—that there ought to be a far larger and more subdivided agency for the public business of our Church. It is not law alone, it is not logic alone, it is not oratory alone—indispensable and most efficient though each of them be within their several spheres of usefulness—yet it is not these, either singly or altogether, which should bear universal rule in the midst of us. These may all exist, in marvellous power and perfection too, without much of what is familiarly termed the knowledge of business, without much discernment of human nature, without much either of intuitive skill or acquired experience in the management of human affairs. We should therefore invite a far larger number both of ministers and elders to come forth on the walks of public and official employment, and these should be put into a far better state of subdivision and in more skilful relationship to each other than heretofore. It is not by a few rapid generalisations, or schemes of committees, flung off at a single heat by the pen of a ready writer—it is not thus that our Church can be made either to start aright or to prosper on her way. What we have most to dread and to deprecate is a hasty universalism that would engross all. If, instead of aspiring and having to do with everything, each satisfied with his own peculiar excellence would labour to do one thing well—this were in far better accordance with the apostolic injunction of each man thinking soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man—this were in far better keeping with the limited faculties of our nature, with the real mediocrity of the human powers.

Let it not be imagined that it is with the ambition of the few that I now hold a reckoning—it is with the indolence of the many. It is not against those who do engage in the public service of the Church that I now speak—for this were affixing a stigma on some of our best and most patriotic men—but against those who do not step forward to that service, and whom we now call on to come over and help us—help those who overladen with work are ready to sink under the

burden of their manifold employments. It is impossible that the business of the Church can be well done with so stinted an agency as ours; and therefore we invite not in fives or in tens but in fifties at least, so many ministers and as many elders, out of whom an adequate number, not of large but of small, and these really efficient and serviceable and well assorted committees might be formed—that each may have but his one committee, or at least but his one convenership to attend to, and that the business of our Church might proceed in a style worthy of its great cause, and worthy too of those great ancestors, the Fathers of the Scottish Reformation, who, not in the depth of their piety alone, but in the profoundness of their secular wisdom and skill in building up whether the right polity or right platform of a Church, were the most remarkable men of their day.

In conclusion, let us not forget the final outgoing of the Apostle upon this subject, when, after having assigned the distribution of the Church's offices, according to the respective gifts of the occupiers, and whom he discharged from all encroachments on each other's functions or provinces—then proceeds to show them a more excellent way, and breaks forth into a descant (one of the most eloquent passages in holy writ) on the powers and properties of that charity which harmonises all, which amalgamates all. Let all our things be done in that spirit of love which is there inculcated so beautifully—love to each other—love to those who are engaged with ourselves in this great battle for the spiritual liberties of Scotland—above all love to the souls of our people—nay love to our enemies in this sore struggle, who now watch for our halting, and have confidently predicted that we shall at length fall to pieces by falling out among ourselves. Let it be our determination and our care to disappoint these calculations. Let patience have its perfect work in our souls; and not by sternness or striving, but by the meekness of wisdom and at the bidding of high principle, let us triumph over every provocation whether on the part of friends or adversaries, that all our heart-burnings and all our wretched jealousies might vanish and give way before the omnipotence of Christian charity.

The principle which we have now brought to bear on the matters of public Christianity is prolific also of applications, manifold and innumerable, to the concerns of personal Christianity. What we have spoken of as essential to the prosperity of a church, is also essential to the prosperity of religion in the heart and habits of an individual. I cannot, at present, expatiate on this; but in one brief sentence let me try to urge it home upon my hearers—that they may learn to blend the outward with the inward, the deeds of the land with the devotions and aspirations of the heart, so as to be ever rising from services to supplications and from supplications to be again falling back upon services. Are they pressing onward to such a spiritual light as they have never realised, or to such heights of sanctification as they have never yet attained—let them try the combination which we now recommend, and see whether a blessing and an enlargement will not come out of it. When they read their Bibles, let them pray with all earnestness for the Spirit—when they pray for the Spirit, let them read with all earnestness their Bibles. Let their performances and their petitions go hand in hand—looking with as much dependence for grace and help from above as if God did all—labouring with as great diligence among the duties of life below as if man did all. O! may such be the spirit of our assembly, and of all its members, approving themselves as men of industry and wisdom, and yet as men of faith and of deepest piety.

POSTHUMOUS SERMONS.

PREFACE.

Dr. Chalmers was licensed as a preacher of the gospel by the Presbytery of St. Andrews on the 31st of July, 1799. In December, 1801, he became assistant to the Rev. Mr. Elliot, minister of Cavers, a parish lying along the banks of the Teviot, a few miles from Hawick. As Mr. Elliot was laid aside by his infirmities, the pulpit duties devolved wholly upon his assistant, after a regular discharge of which for a period of about nine months, Dr. Chalmers left Cavers in September, 1802. He was ordained as minister of the parish of Kilmany, in Fifeshire, on the 12th of May, 1803; and twelve of the most important and most fruitful years of his life were spent in this peaceful retreat. In the autumn of 1815, he was removed to Glasgow, in which city eight years of incessant but triumphant toil were devoted to all the different kinds of ministerial labour. In November, 1823, he finally resigned the pulpit for the professor's chair. He was twenty-three years of age at the date of his ordination, and forty-three when he gave up his charge—his ministry as an ordained clergyman covering thus the space of twenty years.

From the large mass of his pulpit preparations Dr. Chalmers had already selected those discourses which seemed to him the worthiest of being published—the likeliest by their publication to do good. Out of the remainder it might have been perilous—it would perhaps have been improper—to have selected so many as thirty-three new sermons, and to have presented them as of equal or kindred merit with those already issued through the press. It occurred to me, however, in reading over this class of his manuscripts, that without injury done to his usefulness or reputation as a preacher, a two-fold—a literary as well as a religious—object might be attained by the publication of a series of them arranged in chronological order.

It was as a preacher that Dr. Chalmers first reached celebrity. His earlier authorship had failed to make any deep impression on the public mind. His Treatise on the "Evidences of Christianity" had begun to attract attention, and would finally have secured to him a high place among the defenders of the Christian faith; but it was the publication of his "Astronomical Discourses" which at once raised him to a pinnacle of higher eminence, gave to him a larger audience, and won for him a larger influence than it had been the lot of any Scottish minister from the days of the Reformation to enjoy. In these discourses, whose eloquence filled all eyes with its dazzling splendour, and opened all lips to praise, an idiomatic peculiarity of phraseology was at once observable. Under this new employer of it, our language took new forms, and showed itself capable of rendering new services; and while critics said of this new way of wielding words that it was neither strictly accurate nor classically elegant, it was universally felt and confessed that by an easy use and mastery of words and phrases which in other hands had been unmanageable, Dr. Chalmers possessed a rare, an unequaled power of setting forth his ideas in a multitude of changing phases, varying in a thousand ways the form of their presentation, not only without any injury to, but with positive and large enhancement of effect. There was an interminable but unwearying variety—a voluminous amplitude which yet never passed into the turgid—the life-blood of a quick intelligence or a most fervid emotion "circulating vitality to the last extremities of expression—to the minutest ramifications of phrase."

But this style of writing, how came it to be adopted and employed? Had it an infancy, a growth? And if so, what was its earliest, its infant condition—and how rose it to such a stately maturity? This volume is presented as a help to him who would prosecute such inquiries. It furnishes him with the means of tracing up very nearly to its fountain-head, that full flowing river whose many-waved bosom has borne so many thousands so triumphantly along. He does not indeed here see that stream rolling at its largest breadth and with its fullest volume—for that it is to the Astronomical, or some other of the already published discourses, that he must look. Nor does he see it, as within narrower banks but with waters purer, deeper, stiller—with more of heaven's own pure light upon them, it ran on when near its close—for that it is to the *Horæ Sabbaticæ* that he must look—but we raise him here to a stand-point whence he can see it through a longer period of its course, and trace it through more of its variations, than previously lay open to his eye.

It is mainly, however, with a hope that, in the form given to it, this volume may serve as a contribution to the religious biography of Dr. Chalmers, that it is put into the reader's

hands. Before him here, and within comparatively narrow compass, he has a series of compositions between the date of the first and the last of which an interval of very nearly half a century occurs. Had the topics treated of in these writings belonged even to any branch of a purely speculative philosophy, it would have interested us to follow, through so long a line of progress, the advancing footsteps of an intellect gifted with such superior power, and urged on by so simple and so strong a love of truth; and that interest would have been quickened into a heightened intensity had we been informed beforehand that, at a certain stage in his progress, a singular revolution had taken place in the opinions and sentiments of the inquirer. But the topics dwelt upon throughout this volume—God, and the revelations He has made of Himself to man, man and his awful relationships with God and eternity—are no matters of mere barren speculation. According to the manner in which they are approached and dealt with by each of us they affect, closely and influentially, our state and character here, our prospects for eternity. It was in this light they were looked upon by the departed author of these writings. It is generally known that some years after his settlement at Kilmany, a revolution happened which altered the whole spirit, course, and object of his life and ministry. He himself believed, that upon the change which then took place his own salvation hinged. He believed that had that change not been realized, he should have stood at last hopelessly condemned at that tribunal before which he has now appeared. Although before that change his faith in the divine origin of Christianity was intelligent and entire—though all the doctrines which our standards teach were fully and unequivocally admitted by him—though as to all the external proprieties of professional conduct, and many of the most attractive virtues of social life, he might have challenged a comparison with the great majority of the men among whom he lived,—yet was it his conviction that the faith which bringeth salvation had not till then been formed—the true and only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God had not been occupied and rested on—the true and only preparation for the services and joys of a holy and blissful immortality had not commenced.

The history of a revolution upon which, according to the estimate of him who passed through it, his personal salvation hung, must necessarily have an exceeding interest to all who agree in the conclusions to which that revolution conducted him. But should it not also awaken the curiosity of those who, in the absence of such an agreement, have yet a strong and general confidence in the entire sincerity and large capabilities of discernment of Dr. Chalmers? They not only do not receive, but they have a strong inward repugnance to those peculiar doctrines, and those peculiar ways—by word and deed—of illustrating and enforcing them, which prevail with a certain class of religionists, whom they are in the habit of regarding generally with a sentiment bordering on contemptuous disgust. They think, that for that sentiment they have good and valid warrant. They believe of those whom they thus pity or despise, that they are very narrow-minded—that they neither see themselves as they are seen by others, nor look with a broad and charitable intelligence along the wide waving lines of human belief. It might serve to shake such out of that confidence wherein they have intrenched themselves, could they be made to see it of another—and that other such a one as they admit Dr. Chalmers to have been—that the very thoughts which they now are thinking, he too once thought—and that all that searching discernment which they credit themselves with, he too once exercised upon the disciples of evangelism—and that the full force of all that recoil and antipathy which they are feeling, he too once felt. I have not inserted in this volume those earlier sermons in which fullest and most vehement utterance is given to the strong dislike which he at that time cherished to the doctrines of free grace, and to the style of character and conduct exhibited by many of the most zealous of their advocates. Enough, however, is presented, to enable the intelligent reader to look upon the earlier period of his ministry, both in its positive and negative aspects, in what was present and required to be removed—in what was absent and required to be imparted—in the prejudices which behooved to be overborne, as well as in the faith which behooved to be implanted. The contrast between the first seven and the succeeding sermons in this volume, will help such a reader to trace in outline the distinctive characteristics of the former and latter epochs of his pulpit-history; and when the full materials for filling up that outline shall have been furnished, still more clearly will he then discern how that earlier experience of Dr. Chalmers qualified him for dealing so wisely, so faithfully and so tenderly as he ever did with those in whom he saw what he once himself had been—and helped to prepare him for becoming what, when all his theological writings shall have been given to the world, I can scarcely doubt that he will be generally acknowledged to have been—the ablest and most judicious, as well as the most eloquent expounder, within the whole range of British authorship, of the two great cardinal doctrines of our faith—the doctrine of the radical and entire depravity of our nature, and the doctrine of the sinner's free gratuitous justification before God through faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

SERMON 1.

*Divine Summary of Human Duty.**

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—MICAH vi. 8.

THIS passage, if taken in connection with the context, would naturally direct our thoughts to the evils of hypocrisy and superstition. It would lead us to infer that the mind alone is the seat of virtue; that in our estimation of religion we are not to have respect to the works of the hand, but only to the moral disposition of the heart. Instead, however, of adverting more particularly to the occasion of the text, I propose to consider it independently, and of itself; and shall first endeavor to illustrate the particular duties enjoined in the text, and shall then consider it in its connection with the religion of Jesus.

The Lord requireth of thee to do justly—to love mercy. The promotion of happiness is the great end of all social duty. Wherefore is it that justice approves itself to our feelings of virtue? Because without its observance, the peace, the happiness, the very existence of society would be endangered. Mercy, also, is the object of moral approbation; because by the relief of indigence, by the consolation of misery, it advances and promotes the happiness of men. Both are equally incumbent, because both conduce to the same end. In the eye of civil polity *doing justly* may be all that is in duty required, but in the eye of eternal reason and virtue, *loving mercy* is no less indispensable. It is the end which these virtues have a tendency to promote that confers upon them their moral obligation. This end is one and invariable; the means which lead to its attainment are diversified with the circumstances of the case. Justice and mercy include in them all the various manners of acting by which we can contribute to the happiness of mankind. Hence they resolve themselves into that great duty which consists in devoting our time and our labor to the welfare of others. Benevolence or universal charity is the source from which the observance of these duties proceeds. It is this principle of love which guides through the path of duty, and is the fountain of all our social virtues. It equally calls upon us to satisfy the demands of justice, and to visit the abodes of wretchedness; to discharge with fidelity the trust reposed in us, and to exercise all our tender affections. Let us cultivate this spirit of benevolence and love, and we fulfill the duties recommended in the text; for all the commandments are briefly comprehended in this saying—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Let us now proceed to the last duty which the text recommends—Thou shalt walk humbly with thy God. Walking humbly with God more immediately involves in it an entire acquiescence in His authority—an unbounded resignation to His will. It is opposed to that

* The manuscript of the following sermon bears the date of January 18, 1798, two months before Dr. Chalmer's eighteenth birthday, and a year and a half before he was licensed by the Presbytery as a preacher of the gospel. It must have been written as a Divinity Hall class exercise during the last session of his regular attendance at the University of St. Andrews. Its concluding paragraphs lay bare to us those fatal misapprehensions of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, which were cherished by him during the first ten years of his ministry—against which he was afterwards all the better fitted to guard others because of his having been so long misled by them himself.

arrogance of mind which would lead us to cavil and repine at the dispensations of His providence. But it also includes in it the whole of piety; to it may be referred all those affections of mind which should result from the relations we stand in to our Creator. It is with God that we are required to walk humbly; and if so, we must be open to every sentiment which the contemplation of His perfections is calculated to inspire—to the awe of His power, to confidence in His wisdom, and to the love of His goodness. The man of humility strives to offer an acceptable service to the Author of his being. Does God speak? he listens to his words with an awful reverence; he reposes an unlimited trust in His veracity. Does God declare his will? with unbounded faith he receives His sovereign mandates and submits to their influence. A sacred reverence for the authority of God keeps him in the path of His divine commandments, and leads him to watch over his conduct with trembling anxiety. But humility towards God does not consist entirely in the dread of His power, and it by no means consists in that slavish terror which enfeebles the energy of the mind, and destroys the vitals of our happiness. The Deity hath deigned to reveal Himself to us under the endearing images of our father and friend. He hath softened the sense of His greatness by giving us a view of his beneficence and love. We ought therefore to cherish sentiments of gratitude and affection, and the contemplation of the divine goodness should inspire our hearts with confidence and joy. Think not, then, that piety casts a gloom over the face of nature. Think not that sullen and dejected it retires from the world to dwell on nothing but subjects of melancholy. Think not that the sigh of sadness or the tears of penitential sorrow are its whole employments. True, the ravages of sin, the imperfections of finite nature, may cause it to hide its face for a time in all the bitterness of grief. But soon will the light of the divine countenance be restored, and that voice of heavenly consolation be heard which speaketh peace to the soul. Then piety appears arrayed in all its beauty and lustre. It harmonizes with every generous feeling of our nature, and ennobles the enjoyments of life. It confers new dignity on man; and the sense of this dignity affords a new theme of gratitude and love.

Now may we be convinced of the propriety of applying the epithet "good" to humility or piety towards God. Alas, it is only in the sense of His wise providence that we can find any rational support to the soul amidst the present scenes of obscurity and confusion! Man mourns over his afflictions; cares and anxieties distract his mind. Following after peace, earnest in the pursuit of happiness, the events of every day convince him of the fallacy of his hopes—every hour brings on new topics of lamentation and complaint. What then shall he do? Shall he sit down under the despondency of continual apprehension, destitute of all hope in futurity, and incapable of the sublime exertions of virtue? In sullen despair shall he drag out his miserable existence without a generous sentiment to elevate his mind, and without a ray of consolation to cheer the gloom of life? No; let the infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness of God be impressed on his mind; let him contemplate those provisions which the Author of nature hath made for the encouragement and comfort of His creatures; and let him fit himself by the exercises of humility and piety, for the enjoyment of the blessings which these provisions insure;—then will be dispelled those clouds of sorrow and darkness which overhung his mind; the peace of his soul will be completely restored. Resting with an humble assurance on the favor of his God, he looks forward with joy to that felicity which His goodness gives him reason to expect. Amidst the storms and the tempests of life he extends his prospects to the regions of everlasting peace. Let us therefore recognize the goodness of genuine humility. It is good in the moral sense, because in the eye of reason and of virtue it naturally results from that relation which subsists between man and his Maker; and it is good also in the natural sense, because it alleviates the evils of this present life, and prepares us for the enjoyment of eternal felicity.

In the same manner we must acknowledge the goodness of benevolence. The exercises of pure and perfect benevolence would convert this vale of tears into a paradise of bliss. Under its benign influence, want and its attendant evils would be banished from the earth; men would feel little of the evils, and would enjoy in perfection the blessings of life. Why has the populous city become an habitation for the beasts of the desert? Wherefore is *that* a dreary wilderness which was formerly crowned with the blessings of plenty—where innocence and peace took up their abode, and nothing was heard but the voice of joy? We are not to say that Nature was unkind, or that she delights in the misery of her children. We have seldom to ascribe it to the ravage of the elements, or to any of those evils which are essential to our state, but to the wickedness and depravity of the human heart—to the dire effusions of passion—to the mad ambition of wealth and of power. These are the principal sources of human wretchedness; and these it is the direct tendency of benevolence to suppress. Under its happy reign all would enjoy the exquisite pleasures of loving and of being beloved—pleasures which are congenial to the heart and make up the chief part of our happiness. Though the powers of nature should conspire to rob us of our peace, yet the voice of love would invite us to gladness. Though the heavens should withhold their rain, and the earth forbear to yield its increase; or, though the fair face of nature should be overcast in the gloom of night, and the blast of the storm should threaten to overwhelm us; yet supported by the kind endearments of friendship, we may continue unruffled and serene, and our minds be open to the most feeling enjoyments. On the other hand, let everything without unite to gratify our desires and increase our enjoyments; let the labor of the year be crowned with success; let the seasons join in concert for our accommodation and ease; let the sun dispense in due proportion his cheering influences; let the fury of the tempest be allayed, and all around us be clothed in mildness and beauty; unless the heart of man accords with the beneficence of nature—unless his mind is open to the warm impressions of sympathy and love—misery will still be our lot; the tale of wo will still be heard in our streets; and this world will continue the abode of wretchedness. The sufferings of Job were aggravated in the extreme. Yet the loss of his wealth, the ravages of disease, the death of his children, the dissolution of the most endearing connections in nature, were all unable to shake the patient fortitude of his mind. Still could he raise to heaven the voice of gratitude and resignation: The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away; blessed be His name. But when his companions and friends, instead of allaying the anguish of his grief, instead of taking upon them the part of a comforter, began to insult him with their bitter accusations, then the vigor of his mind was unequal to the arduous contest, and his soul, no longer able to support itself, was subjected to the mingled emotions of indignation and grief. Nature is kind enough, if we were only kind to one another. But often, alas! do the dark designs of malice work in our breasts; often do the silly emotions of pride and of envy obstruct the enjoyments of social intercourse. O that the principle of benevolence within us were powerful enough to eradicate these passions from our hearts. O that we were sacrificing our absurd notions of importance and dignity, our views of interest and ambition, to that great object—the good of others. O that the sufferings of our fellow-men were calling forth the tears of sympathy, and rousing to exertions of beneficence and love; then the burdens of life would bear light upon us, and our days would pass in the pure enjoyment of innocence and virtue.

Let us now proceed to consider the religion of Jesus in its connection with the spirit of the text.

Justice, mercy, and piety, are all that are or can be required of us by God. Hence if we are bound to acquiesce in the doctrines and to obey the precepts of the gospel, this acquiescence and this obedience must be the consequence of one or other of those duties which are enjoined in the text. Faith in the religion of Jesus must be the necessary effect of walking humbly

with God, if the testimony of the apostle and evangelists be entitled to belief. This will appear from considering the nature of that evidence by which Christianity is supported. Those arguments for its truth which are derived from our experience of the usual conduct and behavior of men have never been refuted. And on the validity of these arguments, we are capable of forming a right, unerring judgment; since the conduct of men in all states and circumstances is the subject of daily observation. But whence are the objections of our opponents derived? They are derived from some supposed defect in the scheme or dispensation of Christianity; from something which they imagine to be inconsistent with the nature of God, or unworthy of His perfections. But can this invalidate the force of that evidence which we know how to measure and ascertain? When reasoning on the conduct of men, we can form our conclusions with certainty and precision; but when reasoning on the conduct of God, we are involved in the clouds of ignorance and error. We are unable to scan the ways of Jehovah, to trace the operations of unerring wisdom. We cannot determine on the rectitude of the divine dispensations, since we know them not in all their relations and all their extent. It is not for us, the frail insects of a day, who are yet in the childhood of existence, who scarce have had time to look about us in the immense theatre of being; it is not for us to oppose the feeble powers of our reason to the wonders of Omnipotence. When we know the mechanism of the universe, when we are acquainted with the laws by which its vast operations are conducted, when we can trace the connections which run through the various systems of being—then, and then only, are we entitled to decide on the propriety of the means which the Author of nature may adopt for the completion of His designs. Seeing then our ignorance in the ways of God, we must be cautious of making some supposed inconsistency with His attributes a ground of rejecting what is proposed as the revelation of His will. No opinion that we may form of His conduct can ever be the criterion of its truth or falsehood. But the case is different with regard to the conduct of men; here we can reason with all the confidence of truth. Shall therefore a mere assumption on the methods of the divine administration counterbalance those arguments on which alone we are capable of deciding with assurance? I leave it to the determination of sound philosophy. Thus Christianity approves itself to our understandings as being divinely inspired, and we fail in our duty to God if we believe not its doctrines nor submit to its precepts.

When inquiring into the divine will we would observe that the doctrines of revelation are laid before us with different degrees of light and clearness. Hence we would receive them with the hesitation of partial knowledge, or with the confidence of truth. What is clearly revealed we would treasure up in our minds as of the most essential importance. What is hid in obscurity or is remote from our apprehensions we would regard with an awful revence, but would forbear to reason on with the assurance of dogmatism. But, alas! this natural order has been inverted—and to this we are in a great measure to ascribe the corruptions of Christianity. Instead of employing their zeal in maintaining that faith and that practice which are clearly laid down in Scripture, and which it insists upon as our duty to God and as essential to our happiness, many have directed their chief attention to those subjects on which it is undecided and obscure. They have attached the highest degree of importance to those doctrines which transcend the limits of our faculties, and to these they have sacrificed all that can inform the understanding or improve the heart. Thus religion is made to consist in dark speculations and unprofitable inquiries. The beautiful simplicity of the gospel is defaced, and a dark veil of mysticism intercepts from our view the light of divine truth. The effects of heavenly instruction are lost on the world, since Christianity thus perverted from its original excellence is unsuited to the natures and capacities of reasonable beings. The corrupters of evangelical purity, in accordance with their zeal for the particular doctrines they

have espoused, maintain the absolute necessity of believing in them. Thus in their systems of theological truth, they have had the audacity to heap article on article, and to crown all with this thundering assertion—that eternal misery awaits those who should dare to dissent. What a lamentable deviation from the spirit of the text! Here the rewards of heaven are attached to the exercise of our virtuous affections. And what is the line of conduct which these would lead us to adopt? They lead us to repose an unlimited confidence in the veracity of God, to examine the revelation of His will with humility and candour, and to keep our minds open to those impressions which the perusal of its contents are fitted to produce. If, therefore, the tenets of these religionists are contained in the Scriptures of truth, it will be a dictate of piety that we acquiesce in them, since it would be an insult on the Divine Being to withhold our assent. But the faith of Christianity is praiseworthy and meritorious only because it is derived from the influence of virtuous sentiments on the mind. Hence the labors of those are grossly misapplied who inculcate the belief of certain religious truths as the method of obtaining the favour of heaven. Let us rather endeavour to inspire men with virtuous affections; let us impress upon their hearts the sentiments of humility and piety; and let us refer the revelations of the divine will to their own examination. They will there recognize the doctrines which it is incumbent on them to believe, and they will discern the sources of this incumbency. Let us tremble to think that anything but virtue can recommend us to the Almighty. True, we wander in the paths of vanity and darkness, and Christ is pointed out to us as our only refuge against the terrors of guilt; but the acknowledgment of our Saviour, that faith in Him, which is essential to our happiness, is brought about by the impulse of moral sentiment, and unless it were so we cannot see how it could insure to us the favour of heaven.

In nothing has the genius of mysticism more displayed itself than in the delineations of that faith which is a requisite to salvation. We recognize the faith of Christianity as that which is derived from the force of reason, and the energy of virtuous sentiment. But the misguided votaries of superstition and fanaticism have involved this subject in darkness. They talk of faith, and their notions of this faith are contradictory and absurd; a faith which consists not in the assent of the understanding, but in some strange undefinable affection of the mind—a faith not derived from the calm exercises of the inquiring faculty, or from the sober suggestions of humility and piety; but a faith which precedes all examination, and is said to be the primary source of all that is good and excellent in the human character. I ask the man of common sense, if he can form to himself any idea of this faith—the favourite topic of declamation with these famed religionists. But they love to soar aloft; their ears are soothed, their imaginations are dazzled with those high-sounding words, those notable phrases which they think can explain all the mysteries of theological science. We consider the faith of Christianity to be the humble assurance of an honest mind which grounds its confidence on the consciousness of its own sincerity, on the view of the divine goodness, and on the contemplation of those provisions which the Author of nature hath made for the encouragement of erring mortals. But the perverters of the truth as it is in Jesus have determined that to be the saving faith which none but the presumptuous can entertain; not that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and which overcometh the world, but that faith which, according with the pride of their minds, elevates them in their own esteem as the peculiar favourites of heaven. This faith (horrible to relate) they carry about with them as an amulet against the reproaches of a guilty conscience, and thus do they stifle the feelings of nature, and check the sentiments of virtue. Sanctioned by this faith they may oppress the poor, the fatherless, and the widow—they may betray the interests of an unsuspecting friend, while they lay claim to the friendship of heaven. Sanctioned by this faith they may indulge in every excess of sensual volup-

tuousness, while they have confidence in their hearts towards God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Sanctioned by this faith they may meditate on schemes of robbery and murder, while they exclaim with exultation —Lo, the Spirit of Jesus is in us.—O my soul come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united. Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations; they bathe their hands in the blood of innocence; they lurk in the dark haunts of villainy; and, good God! they sit secure amidst such enormities, and rejoice in their presumption as the mark of intimacy with the Spirit, and of growth in grace.

O Christianity whither hast thou fled? where hast thou taken up thine abode? We sought for thy instructions, but counsels were darkened by words without knowledge. We sought for thy beauties, and the picture of horrid deformity was exhibited to our view. We sought for thy consolations, and our souls were appalled with the sounds of horror and despair. Surely thou art despoiled of thy graces and thy ornaments. Surely thou hast resigned the lovely honours of thy head. We took thee for the messenger of glad tidings, for the publisher of love, peace, and joy; but we have seen thee clothed with terror, and striking with dismay thy slavish worshippers. We took thee for the support and encouragement of virtue, but, alas! we have seen all that accords with the feelings of our minds despised and overlooked, and we have seen thy blessings and thy rewards attached to the pride of censorious dogmatism, to the confidence of presumption, and to the unmeaning effusions of false zeal. The soul formed to sentiments of generosity sickens at the prospect, and must either rise superior to the prejudices of the times, or (dreadful alternative) shelter itself in infidel repose.

Let us therefore pray the Father of Spirits that He would dispel those clouds of ignorance and error which overwhelm the nations; that He would enable them to see the religion of Jesus in its native purity; that He would enable them to see it through that vail of mysticism with which the pernicious superstition of men hath invested it; that He would enable them to see it as the offspring of reason and virtue. Then they will leave their dark and intricate speculations. They will learn to relish the simplicity of the gospel—that affecting strain of sentiment which pervades it —that warm spirit of benevolence which it breathes—those sublime precepts of morality which it inculcates. They will learn to admire and to imitate the rational and elevated piety, the ardent charity, the pure and exalted virtue of Jesus and his apostles.

SERMON II.

*The Guilt of Calumny.**

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."—JAMES iv. 11.

IT is not calumny to speak evil of another when the evidence of his guilt is undeniable, and when it is necessary to defend the young against the dangers of his example. It is not calumny to deal out to vice its infamy and its correction—to hold it up to the terror and the execration of the neighbourhood —to lay open the secret recesses of hypocrisy—or to unmask the dissimulations of injustice. If this is to be denounced as calumny, vice will reign triumphant in the world, public opinion will lose its energy, deceit and profli-

* No date is attached either to this sermon or to that which immediately succeeds it. The state however of the manuscripts, and the style of the penmanship (which from the marked changes it undergoes at different successive stages is almost of itself a sufficient guide), as well as certain internal evidences, carry with them the conviction that these two sermons were among the very earliest of Dr. Chalmers' pulpit preparations.

gacy will have nothing to fear from the resentment of indignation; they will lift an unabashed countenance in the face of day, and lord it in insolent security. Some are for carrying the victory of candour to a disgusting and an affected extremity. I hate that candour that would control the risings of a generous indignation, where guilt is open and unquestionable; that candour which can ape Christian charity, while it looks with patience on the oppressions or the triumphs of injustice; that candour which can maintain a regulated composure of aspect, though it sees virtue in disgrace, and vice enthroned in the honours of preferment; that well-bred accommodation which can smile equally on all, and sit in contentment amid the general decay of worth and principle. Such a man as this passes for a lover of peace, an excellent member of society, who never thinks of disturbing our repose by his furious and turbulent invectives—who never obtrudes his own offensive peculiarities of temper or of opinion—who never acts the firebrand of mischief, but suffers us to proceed in quietness. But to complete the picture, this good-natured accommodating man has sometimes an interest to mind, which requires him on the one hand to yield to the reigning corruptions, and on the other to depress the credit and pretentions of an obnoxious individual. Let us observe the plan which this enemy to evil-speaking and to everything that is violent and intemperate, let us observe the plan he pursues to time it to his purposes. This pattern of Christian temper will find it necessary to throw out his insinuations, but then he will do it with decency; he will betray no rash or unguarded violence; he will trample on no established ceremonial; he will speak kindness and smile complacency on the victim of his resentment; he will honour him with the attentions of politeness, and share with him the hour of mirth and conviviality. Some feelings of malignity may rankle in his bosom—but then he does not offend by the ostentation of them. Some secret mischief may be brooding in his intentions, but then he does not alarm by his menaces. Whatever is calculated to agitate or terrify, he kindly withdraws from his observation, and delights him by his manners and civility, though he find it convenient at times to make free with his character—propagate in secret the tale of infamy—set all his low rabble of emissaries on the work of misrepresentation—and awaken the contempt or hostility of a deluded public. Yet such is the false esteem of calumny, which pervades these scenes of interest and competition—where the artifices of mere policy have perverted every sentiment of justice, and crushed every genuine and unaffected feeling of the heart—where the indignation of a mind at glaring and acknowledged guilt, is ascribed to the working of a foul-mouthed malignity—while not a man appears to lift the voice of remonstrance against the character of him who, under the semblances of a smooth exterior, will spread his deceitful insinuations and work the ruin and disgrace of the upright.

The guilt of calumny lies in the three following circumstances: First, in the imperfection of that evidence upon which the calumny is founded. Second, in the injury it does to the unhappy victim. Third, in its prejudicial effects upon the general interests of virtue.

Frst, then, as to the imperfection of the evidence. There are some actions which carry villainy on the very face of them, and which can meet with no quarter even from the meekness of charity—such as the foulness of a murder, the infamy of artful and deliberate seduction, the desertion of a parent who is left by the ingratitude of his children to the solitude and helplessness of age, the brazen effrontery of falsehood, which can rejoice in the success of its artifices, and laugh at the unsuspecting simplicity of the virtuous. There are other actions where the merit is ambiguous or uncertain, and this is the favourite field for the exercise of calumny. When a man relieves a beggar in the street, it may be the impulse of generous emotion, but calumny will tell you it is the vanity of ostentation. When a man stops short in the career of prosperity, and resigns himself to the mercy of his creditors, it may be the cruelty of misfortune, but calumny will tell you of his concealed

treasure, of his fictitious entries, of his sly and artful evasions. When a man gives himself to mirth and to company, it may be the innocent act of a convivial and benevolent heart, but calumny will tell you of his midnight excess, of his habitual licentiousness, of his extravagant dissipation. When we hear in the house the music of family devotion, it may be in the spirit of old and respectable piety, but calumny will tell you of the rigour of puritanical solemnity, or the disgusting mask of the hypocrite. When a man is prosecuting the claims of justice, it may be with all the purity of upright and honourable intentions, but calumny will tell you that it is the gripe of avarice or the insolence of oppression. Where candour would hesitate, calumny assumes the tone of authority. Where candour would demand proof and investigation, calumny gives her confident decisions. Where candour is for waiting in silence and suspending her judgments, calumny draws her precipitate inference, and indulges in all the temerity of invective. Where candour is for checking the progress of a malicious report as unwarranted by evidence, calumny renews all her efforts and gives fresh activity to the circulation. Where the merit of an action is disguised by the uncertainty of its evidence, or the ambiguity of its complexion, candour always gives her decision on the side of innocence and of mercy, but it is the delight of calumny to give it a dark, malignant colouring, and to send it round to infamy and reprobation. You must all have observed the successive additions that are given to the tale of scandal as it circulates through a neighbourhood. They sometimes proceed from malice, but oftener I believe from an idle, gossiping propensity—from the love of being listened to with astonishment—from the want, not of heart and tenderness, but from the want of cautious and reflecting prudence—from the hurry and inadvertence of the moment when acquaintances meet, and the happy hour is given to thoughtlessness and to gayety. Let it be remembered, however, that thoughtlessness is criminal when it is employed in giving currency to falsehood—when it tends to mislead society on a matter of such sacred importance as the character of one of its members—when it consigns the upright to shame and to infamy—when it sets up the hasty cry of execration in cases where the evidence is uncertain, and candour tells us to forbear.

The action which calumny condemns in its unhappy victim should be attributed to him with hesitation, because in each step of its progress the story is apt to gain an addition from the mistakes of the inconsiderate, or from the fabrications of a deliberate malignity. The motive from which the action is said to have originated should, if possible, be assigned with still greater hesitation, because it lies in the heart—it hides in a veil of impenetrable secrecy—it is unseen by every eye save Omniscience—it is written on no record save the book of judgment—it remains untold till that awful day when the universe shall hear it—when the worlds shall assemble round our Redeemer's throne, and listen to the revelations of justice. There is no subject that demands more time and more investigation than a question of character; yet how seldom do men think of suspending their judgment—how rash and how presumptuous in their decisions—how prone to malicious interpretation in cases that are ambiguous—how fond of indulging in the eloquence of invective, and how elated with the malignant pleasure of throwing ridicule on the absent, and sending the tale of detraction through the country. It is a peculiarity which you must all have observed, that where the case is positively uncertain the general propensity is to give it on the side of condemnation—to attach to it the most malignant construction of which it is susceptible—to dress it up in the colours of infamy, and to give all the confidence of truth to what are at best but the fancies of a suspicious temper. It is in this way that the world is ever doing the grossest injustice to individuals—that the innocent are at times repelled by the scowl of suspicion—that virtue labours under the contempt of a deluded people—that the man whose heart rises in all the warmth of affection can often meet with no eye of kindness to cheer

him, no friend to enlighten the solitude of his bosom. There is a worth that escapes the eye of an unthinking world—a deed of exalted charity that they never hear of—a tear of secret affection that shrinks from notice, and courts the indulgence of retirement—a life spent in unseen acts of beneficence which are only recorded in the book of heaven. To all this the world is a stranger; it sees not the heart; it forms its estimate upon the appearances of a delusive exterior; it overlooks the intention, and in the temerity of its heedless decisions, will lacerate and deform the best of characters. The world is the slave of manners. It will love you if you can put on the smiling countenance of affection; it will give you credit for a social and benevolent heart if you can lead your company to mirth, and maintain the frank and open air of an undissembled honesty. But how many of the first of our race are incapable of manner—are oppressed by the embarrassments of modesty—shrink from the observation of the world—give themselves up to the silence of an awkward timidity, and under the disguise of a cold and unpromising exterior, are received in every company with the frowns of antipathy and disgust. The character of such a man is not known beyond the little circle of his friends and of his family—of those poor whom his bounty sustains, and those cottages which his charity enlightens. He lives to obscurity, and dies in forgetfulness; no epitaph to blazon his virtues—no pomp of heraldry to embalm his remembrance. His death is never heard of among the tidings of the market-place. His only memorial is the memorial of simple and unnoticed virtue—the tears of his children, and the regret of his humble neighbourhood.

Let the sense of our ignorance restrain a disposition to rash and unthinking calumny. The action is often transformed by the errors of inadvertence, or the artifices of a wilful misrepresentation. The motive is as often disguised from the secret and unknown circumstances on which it is founded. To tell the motive we must fathom the mysteries of the heart which sits in an invisible retirement, and eludes the penetration of mortals. In deciding upon a partial view of circumstances we run the risk of a total misconception; the addition of a single fact will often suffice to reverse the judgment we had formed and to convince us that that action is laudable which, in the temerity of our unthinking ignorance, we had before pronounced to be criminal. When a man shuts himself up in retirement, and abstains from the expenses of hospitality, calumny will immediately denounce him as an avaricious and unsociable character; but calumny should stop its mouth when it hears that all the savings of this frugality are given to support the infirmity of an aged parent. When a man gives up the labourious exercises of his employment, and becomes an humble dependent on the charity of others, calumny will instantly ascribe it to the love of ease and of indolence; but calumny should soften its decision when it hears that his strength is wasted by the secret and unnoticed visitations of disease. When a man keeps back from the celebration of a sacrament, calumny will talk of his impious contempt for ordinances; but calumny should assume a milder tone when it hears that under the death of a beloved child he has withdrawn himself to the grief of solitude, and labours under all the agitations of a dark and disordered melancholy. When a man turns away from solicitations of charity, calumny may say that it is the gripe of avarice; but calumny should reserve its sentence when it hears that he is on the eve of falling in the tide of bankruptcy, and that he will surrender the wreck of his fortune to satisfy the higher claims of justice and of his creditors. Ignorant then as we are of motives and of circumstances, we should learn to be cautious and hesitating on a question of character, to check every slanderous and malignant propensity, to feel how much is due to truth and justice, and if not able to hush to abhor the tale of infamy. Let us at least withdraw our countenance from its propagation, and blush to prostitute our testimony to the unsupported assertions of a petty and contemptible scandal. What can be said of those who sit in close convention and plot the massacre of a virtuous reputa-

tion, who delight to survey human nature in its most odious and degrading attitudes, who look with an exulting eye over the deformed exhibitions of vice and folly, who seem to feast on the melancholy picture of another's guilt, whose ears are only opened to the tale of detraction, and whose mouths are only opened to traduce and to vilify? If anything can add to our indignation it is the midnight and impenetrable secrecy under which these proceedings are conducted, the artful insinuations they practice against him whom they have singled out as the victim of their calumny, the cowardly advantages that they take of his absence, the smile of affection and civility which they can force into their countenance, while their heart is brooding over the most dark and malignant purposes. Let it be remembered that we may be guilty of calumny without speaking evil. This is the most odious and disgusting of all calumny; not an open and intrepid assertion, but a cowardly insinuation, a hint, a sneaking indirect artifice, an expression of regret, a distant allusion to set malignity to the work of conjecture, and to awaken the suspicion of your company. This is calumny in fact, though not in form. It is sure to be accompanied with all the mischief of calumny. It gives sufficient foundation for a tale to circulate through the country, an impression to run through all the workshops of scandal in the neighbourhood, a groundwork from which a diseased fancy will conjure up its images of guilt and of profligacy, a report which, however trifling in its commencement, will rise through successive additions to a ruinous and malignant falsehood. Let the tale of detraction be listened to with distrust. Much is to be deducted; all the errors that gradually creep into representations from the inaccuracy of the careless, or the knowing and deliberate fabrications of the malignant; all the errors that proceed from our ignorance of other circumstances by which the merit of the action may be most essentially affected; and above all, the errors that proceed from our ignorance of the heart, and of its secret and unfathomable mysteries. Such is the openness of the public ear to the tale of detraction that calumny is too often successful even in her most base and unprincipled efforts. No virtue however exalted can escape her foul and pestilential attacks; she can array the loveliness of innocence in the garb of infamy, and turn the scowl of every eye against the most pure and upright and gentle of characters. This is an awful combination of wickedness—the combination of malignity and falsehood—a combination against all that is sacred in truth, and all that is endearing in domestic tranquillity—a combination against the happiness of families and the peace of society—a combination against the reign of virtue in the world, and against the best comforts which cheer and alleviate the lot of humanity.

This leads me to the second head of discourse—The sufferings which calumny inflicts upon its unhappy victim. All are born to feel the salutary control of public opinion. It is a most powerful engine for the preservation of virtue. Men will compass sea and land to gain the applause of their countrymen. Enough for them the reward of honourable distinction. It is the voice of glory to which they listen, and the voice is omnipotent. It is to the inspiration of her voice that we owe all that is exalted in patriotism, in war, in philosophy. For her the statesman will bravely maintain his integrity, and to be the man of the people he will renounce the favour of princes and the gains of a petty ambition. For her the commander will meet death with a fearless countenance, and eye with intrepid composure the scenes of blood and of violence into which he is entering. For her the student sits by the light of the midnight taper, and in the animating anticipations of future eminence can renounce without a sigh the charms of indolence and of gayety. Even to the home-bred walks of life and of business the voice of glory is not a stranger. You will meet with ambition in the lowest cottages of the country. Its aim is humble, but it is only the obscurity of circumstances which restrains it. In kind and in character it is the same with that ambition which figures to the eye of the world on a more exalted theatre—the same unwearied and persevering constancy in

the prosecution of its object, the same jealousy of reputation, the same insatiable appetite for applause, the same triumphant elevation in the moment of success, the same misery under the sufferings of disappointment. To see man it is not necessary to traverse all countries, or to witness all the varieties of religion and government. It is not necessary to step beyond the limits of the little town or hamlet in which Providence has placed you. You will meet with all the elements of human character in the rustic abodes of simplicity and nature. You will there meet with that ambition which if placed in a higher sphere would scatter disorder among the nations, and strive to control the destiny of empiries. You will meet with that cruelty which, if at the head of a victorious army, would carry outrage and violence into the habitations of the innocent, and kindle in malignant joy at the barbarity of war. You will meet with that avarice which, if elevated to the management of a province, would fill the country with taxation, and flourish on the distress and poverty of millions. You will also meet with all the more virtuous and honourable propensities of the mind, with that goodness which in a higher sphere would have risen to an exalted patriotism, with that contempt for the disgraceful which would have lifted its voice against the measures of a corrupt and degenerate policy, with that firmness which would have withstood the frown of power and the fury of popular commotion.—But to return from this digression.

What in the highest stations of society is called respect for the public opinion, is in humbler and more contracted spheres called respect for the opinion of the neighbourhood. Respect for the opinion of others is a constant but irresistible principle in the human constitution. To disdain it is the boast of an affected independence; it is an effusion of vanity; it is an idle pretence to a stoical and romantic elevation of character. Not a man, I will venture to say, but feels his dependence on public opinion. Even though armed with the consciousness of integrity he feels himself compelled to pay homage at its shrine. You will seldom, I may say you will never, meet with an example of independence solitary and unsupported—an independence founded exclusively upon the consciousness of virtue and the silent reflections of a desolate and unbefriended bosom—an independence that can brave the scowl of every eye and the desertion of all its acquaintances. A man of firm and independent energy will at times appear who can stand before the eye of the world in the manly and intrepid attitude of defiance; but I contend that this energy is supported from without. It is supported by the testimony of some selected person on whose esteem he places his pride and his enjoyment; it is supported by the anticipation of that day when the eyes of the public shall be opened and their curses converted into admiration and gratitude; it is supported, in fact, by that very respect for public opinion which he now professes to disown, and of which his proceedings would speak him to be totally divested. But take from him the last remnants of his friends, take from him his last refuge against the malignity of an unthinking world, give him no eye of welcome to which he may retire from the persecutions of injustice, let every countenance bear hatred against him, and let there be no voice of kindness to alleviate the gloom of his solitude, he will fall even though encompassed with the armor of virtue; the accumulated weight of infamy will be unsupportable to him; he will pine away in the anguish of desertion, and welcome the silence of the grave as his only retreat from the horrors of this world's cruelty. Let the severity of the world's opinion then be reserved as the punishment and the correction of vice. But calumny directs this severity against the virtuous. Calumny dooms the upright to contempt and infamy. Calumny tramples on all distinctions of character, and makes any man a victim to her malicious artifices. To take away a good name is to take away the dearest privilege of integrity. It is to take away the last consolation of the unfortunate. It is to take away that generous pride which glows even in the poor man's bosom, and supports the vigor of his purposes. Ask him who has gone through life, and felt its

vicissitudes, who has outlived the wreck of his circumstances, and is forced in the evening of his days to descend to the humble tenement of poverty—he will tell you that he has not lost all while his character remains to him—that he still inherits the best gift which providence can bestow—the sympathy of an affectionate neighbourhood. Dreary is the winter of his age, but it has the homage of a sincere esteem to soothe and to enlighten it. Sad is the fall of his family; but why should they feel themselves degraded?—none can impeach their honesty or attach dishonor to their name. To the eye of sentiment, a man like this appears more respectable than even in his better days of opulence and comfort. We venerate the gray hairs of the unfortunate—of him who bears up with cheerfulness against the hardships which heaven has inflicted—of him who retires in silence and gives the remainder of his years to peaceful obscurity, who spends the evening of his life in humble and uncomplaining patience, whom experience has taught wisdom, and wisdom has taught the exalted lessons of contentment and piety. To pursue the unfortunate with calumny is to give the last aggravation to their sufferings. It is to make them poor indeed. It is to add to the pangs of that heart that is already wrung with the cruelty of misfortune. It is removing the only support that is left to them in this dark and uncertain world. It is to bestrew with thorns that weary journey which it has pleased heaven to make otherwise so painful. There are some minds of peculiar sensibility which cannot withstand the scowl of prejudice and disdain, to whom dislike is painful, and whose every joy withers away at the glance of coldness. How severe to such is the rude touch of calumny! How cruel to withdraw the smiles of affection from him whose every purpose is conceived in the spirit of benevolence, to sting by coarse imputations the delicacy of his bosom, to distress by an unkind look that heart which breathes all the soul of goodness and honesty. To a man of kind intentions the frown of hatred is insupportable. He knows that he does not deserve it, and he feels its injustice. Heaven can witness his integrity, and it is hard that the world should be to him a wilderness, or that the tranquility of his life should be outraged by the effects of a malignant calumny. I do not say that the world in its unkind treatment of virtue is actuated by a spirit of wanton cruelty: I impute it to rash and unthinking ignorance; I regard it as a dupe to the malicious artifices of those who have an interest in misleading the public opinion, and in tarnishing the honours of an upright and respectable character. When the world is undeceived, it is ever ready to do justice to those whom it has injured by its opinion—to sympathize with them in their unmerited sufferings—to assert the cause of disgraced and persecuted virtue, and to raise the voice of a generous indignation against the arts of an unfeeling calumny. But how often does it happen that the world is never undeceived; that prejudice has shut its ears against the representations of the candid; that the remonstrances of the injured are never listened to; that they are given to the wind; that they are never heard till he reach the grave's peaceful retreat, and unbosom his sorrows to that heavenly witness who has seen all his griefs and all his errors? The public mind of every free country is generous, and ready to award to the deserving its tribute of admiration and gratitude. But though the public mind be generous, it is the slave of prejudice and misconception. It takes its tone from the reigning system of policy and of opinion. In the hands of the artful, it can be fashioned into an instrument of injustice, persecution, and revenge. The history of our own country furnishes innumerable examples of men consigned to infamy and to desertion for having uttered a sentiment offensive to the reigning politics of the day—for having given way to the warmth of an honest enthusiasm—for rising in all the ardour of an exalted patriotism—for lifting up their voice and their testimony against the measures of a corrupt and domineering influence. I do not say that when the public combine against the fame or the interest of such a character they do it in the spirit of malignity. They are deceived. They are the dupes of imposture. A false alarm is made to oc-

cupy the public ear. The ardour of patriotism is stigmatized as the turbulence of rebellion. We at times hear of men lying under a cloud. Trace the ignominy of these men to its foundation, and you will often find that it originates in a political artifice—in a cry set up by an interested combination of enemies—in the unprincipled hostility of the powerful against an obnoxious individual—in the virulent and rancourous malignity of a domineering party. Examples of this kind are not confined to the great theatre of political contention. You will meet with it in every petty district of the country—in our towns where ancient integrity is disgraced, and a putrid electioneering morality deals calumny against the virtuous; in our corporations where monopoly reigns triumphant, and envy and interest combine to crush the independence of an aspiring character; and in all those numerous departments of life and of business where the eagerness of competition stirs up every wicked passion of the heart, and throws it loose from the restraints of principle.

The mischief of calumny is not confined to the object against which it is directed. It invades the peace of his family; its cruelty descends to the youngest of his children who can blush at a father's disgrace, or whose little bosom can fire indignant at the aspersion of a father's integrity. A parent's reputation is a sacred inheritance. It reflects luster on all his connections. His children lift their heads in triumph amid the ills of poverty and misfortune. They carry him to the grave, but the remembrance of his example remains with them—it proves the guardian of their integrity; corruption in vain offers her allurements, there is a principle within them that proves at once their pride and their protection—it is the image of that departed father whom they study to emulate and to admire.

SERMON III.

The Troubled Heart Comforted.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."—JOHN xiv. 1.

It is remarkable that all the images employed to represent human life are significant of weakness, instability, and suffering—a pilgrimage, a dark and toilsome journey, a wilderness of tears, a scene of vanity, a tale of which the remembrance vanishes, a flower which every blast of heaven can wither into decay. From the helplessness of infancy to the decrepitude of age the life of man is an endless scene of care and of anxiety—at one time agitated by the sufferings of a disappointed ambition, at another labouring under the infirmity of disease, at another depressed by the hardships of society, at another humbled under the frown of pride and insolence, at another afflicted by the awful desolations which death makes among friends and among families. The grave is said to be a refuge from the pains and sufferings of mortality; but without the light of the gospel how cold and how dreary are its consolations—what a dread uncertainty in the region which lies beyond it! The body is laid in the churchyard; but where is the departed spirit? The bones are mingling with the dust of the ground; but can the life and sensibility of the mind be extinguished? The flesh is a prey to worms; but will you say that intelligence can die, or that the soul of man can wither into nothing? Good heavens! is there some distant land to which the ghosts of our fathers repair? Do they lift the voice of joy, or weep in gloomy remembrance over the days that are past? Does felicity reign in the abode of spirits, or do they mourn that immortality which condemns them to never-ending years of pain and of solitude? Is the continuation of life on the other side of the grave a continua-

tion of that wretchedness which distresses the present existence of mortals? These are momentous questions; but who is there to satisfy our anxiety? No visitation of light or knowledge from the tomb—no midnight whisper of departed friend to tell us the secret of our path; all is doubt and apprehension and impenetrable silence. Our hearts are troubled within us, and seek for a comforter—and a Comforter hath come; the day-spring from on high hath visited us; the secrets of futurity have been laid open; a celestial splendour now sits on the habitations of darkness; a great deliverer hath appeared, who is the healing of the nations, and the salvation of all the ends of the earth. He comes with tidings of comfort: "In my Father's house are many mansions. Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

In the prosecution of the following discourse I shall attempt to prove that there is no trouble to which the heart of man is exposed that a belief in the doctrines of the gospel is not calculated to purify or to alleviate. But in preaching the consolations of religion there is one caution that cannot be too frequently impressed upon the minds of Christians. These consolations can only be addressed to the sincere—to him who can appeal for the honesty of his principles to something more substantial than the words of holiness that drop from his tongue, or to the tears of penitential sorrow that flow from his eyes—to him who can appeal to the purity of his life, to the integrity of his bargains, to his deeds of active and disinterested beneficence, to the fair and open generosity of his proceedings, to that unspotted innocence of character which no breath of suspicion can defile, no calumny can impeach. It is only to a character like this that we can address the consolations of the gospel, and these consolations are the most exalted privilege of humanity. They are the great remedy against its sufferings. They give triumph and elevation to the wretched, strength to the infirm, and comfort to the bed of agony and disease. This is a world of tears; but the gospel tells us that he who soweth in tears shall reap in joy. It points out to us the peace of a blessed eternity, and supports the spirit of the afflicted by the triumphant anticipation of better days. Many are the evils which darken and distress the pilgrimage of the virtuous. But it is a pilgrimage which leads them to heaven, to those mansions of felicity where they shall rest from their labours, and all their sorrows be forgotten. The consolations of the gospel sustain the heart of the unfortunate; they enlighten the last days of the old man who mourns in all the helplessness of age; they tell him that the eye of his Redeemer is upon him, and that He will soon translate him to an inheritance of unfading joy. The gospel is a dispensation of comfort. It is the good man's anchor. It bids him rejoice even in the gloomiest hours of affliction. It chases despair from his bosom, and though surrounded with all the dreary vicissitudes of this world, he can rise to the throne of mercy in songs of praise and of gratitude. Such are the triumphs of our Redeemer's love—such the debt of gratitude that man owes to his Saviour—to Him who has opened the path to immortality, and given the inheritance of angels to the frail children of guilt and disobedience—to Him who has cheered the awful desolation of the grave, and revealed to us the triumphs of that eternal day which lies beyond it—to Him who came down to earth with the tidings of salvation, and taught His disciples to believe in the resurrection of the upright. Our Saviour felt the sufferings of humanity, and He therefore knew what consolations to apply. He felt the vanity of this world's pleasures, and He secures to us a treasure in heaven. He felt the cruelty of this world's hatred, and He has propitiated for us the friendship of that mighty and unseen Being whose eye is continually upon us, and whose benevolence will never desert us. He felt the painful severity of this world's injustice, and He has revealed to us a day of triumph and of deliverance, when He will come to exalt the upright, and to vindicate the wrongs of suffering innocence.

When our Saviour addressed His disciples in the words of the text, their prospects were dreary and disconsolate. They saw enemies multiply on every

side—the storm of persecution gathering; they saw the bigotry of a deluded people in arms to oppose them; they saw their numbers weakened every hour by the desertion of the people; they saw themselves withering rapidly away into a feeble and unprotected remnant; they saw the rulers of the country in fury against them, and brooding over their awful purposes of vengeance. Such were the last days of the meek and patient Jesus—deserted by all but a chosen few who still persevered in the fidelity of their attachment, and rallied round to support Him amid the storm of persecuting violence. Yes! the disciples of our Saviour have left us a noble example of friendship and independence. Theirs was the pure and generous intrepidity of the upright. It was the sacred elevation of principle. It was the manly and commanding attitude of virtue. It was what I would call the sublime of human character; the serenity of conscious rectitude; a mind enthroned on the firm and immovable basis of integrity, and that can maintain its tranquillity while tempests rage, and the blackness of despair gathers around it. What an interesting picture!—our Saviour surrounded with the little band of disciples that still remained to Him among the wreck of His adherents, sustaining the fortitude of their spirits in the hour of terror. O religion! how sublime thy triumphs—how glorious thy victories! What a sacred independence dost thou inspire! What a noble superiority over the passions and weaknesses of mortality! What intrepidity in the day of trial and of danger! What calm and inward elevation even amid the terrors of martyrdom! We do not now live under these terrors; but there is no generation in the history of man that is exempted from affliction. There is a sorrow in the heart of man which nothing but religion can alleviate; a trouble that can find no refuge but in the consolations of piety; a disquietude that can only rest in the hope of heaven; a darkness which can find no relief but in the faith of the gospel and in the light of our Redeemer's countenance.

Let me confine myself to a few of the more striking examples from the catalogue of human afflictions. There is the infirmity of disease—a sickness which all the administration of earthly medicine cannot alleviate; a disorder that bears down upon its unhappy victim, and carries him through years of pain and of languishing to the grave of silence. There are some into whose gloomy chambers the light of day never enters; who moan out a dreary existence in the agony of distress; on whom the hand of Providence lies heavy and whom disease in the severity of her visitations has numbered among the children of the wretched. What an aggravation to the miseries of such a state when it is embittered by the hardships of poverty; when the man of sickness can meet with no cordial to sustain him, and no attendance to administer to his necessities; when he has nothing to trust to but the reluctant charity of a neighbour whom decency has compelled to come forward with the offering of his services; when he lies stretched on a bed of restlessness with no child to weep over him—no friend to support him in the last hours of his pilgrimage—surely you will say such a man is born to an inheritance of melancholy and despair. But there is no melancholy which the religion of Jesus cannot enlighten: no despair which His consolatory voice cannot revive into confidence and joy. Christianity is ever present to soothe the agonies of the wretched; and in the last struggles of the dying man you may see the picture of its triumph. He sees death approach him with an untroubled heart. He believes in God, and he believes in Jesus His messenger. The grave is to him a refuge from suffering, and the passport to a triumphant immortality. To him the silence of the tomb is welcome. He lies down in quietness, but he will again awaken to the light of an everlasting day.

Another example of trouble and distress in the history of man is the treachery and injustice of neighbours. In preaching the consolations of religion it is a most unprofitable display of eloquence to dwell upon scenes of romantic and imaginary distress. Such pictures as those are the mere amusements of a poetical fancy, and can serve no substantial purpose of comfort or instruc-

tion. If we wish religion to be useful, we must dwell on its application to actual and everyday occurrences. We must descend to all the realities of human life. We must accompany our hearers into their houses, their families, and their business. We must make them feel that religion is something more than the dream of fanaticism, or the idle abstraction of a visionary. We must make them feel its weight and its importance, and shrink from no familiarity however unwarranted by the example of our great patterns and directors in pulpit eloquence, or however offensive to the pride of a morbid and fastidious delicacy. Any other views of religion are vain and unprofitable. They only serve to disguise the human character, and to throw a false and delusive coloring over the walks of life. They resemble those works of fiction which may give delight and entertainment to the fancy, or amuse the reader by the splendours of an ornamental eloquence, while they leave no lesson behind them, and can be transferred to no purpose of substantial improvement. It is under those impressions that I bring forward the injustice of neighbours as standing high in the catalogue of human afflictions. We have all felt it to be of real and frequent occurrence, and it is certainly one of the most painful feelings to which you can expose a mind of pure and delicate integrity. I know nothing more calculated to provoke the indignation of an honest mind than to see the simplicity of an upright character surrounded by the low arts of knavery and imposition —trampled upon by the villainy of those whom gratitude ought to have secured to his interest—laughed at and insulted because he has too little suspicion to guard against the tricks of a sneaking duplicity, and too much generosity to distrust that man who comes to him under the disguise of smooth words and an open countenance. The loss which the injured man sustains from the injustice of his neighbour forms but a small part of his vexation. When a loss is the pure effect of accident or misfortune, it may not deprive us of a moment's sleep, or cost us a moment's uneasiness. But when the same or an inferior loss is the effect of injustice, it comes home to the feelings with a severity which to some minds is most painfully tormenting. The loss is of little importance; but who can bear to have the generosity of an open and unsuspecting confidence insulted—who can bear to be surrounded with falsehood, artifice, and intrigue—who can bear that most grievous of all disappointments, the treachery of one who has practiced on our simplicity, and on whose integrity we placed a fond and implicit reliance—who can bear to be placed in a theatre where malignity and injustice are in arms against us, where we can meet with no affection to enlighten the solitude of our bosom, no friendship in which to repose the defence of our reputation and interest? To a man whose heart rises in all the warmth of affectionate sincerity the treachery of violated friendship is insupportable. He feels himself placed in a wilderness where all is dark, and cheerless, and solitary. He resigns himself to all the horrors of a disordered melancholy, and his spirit sinks within him under the reflection of this world's injustice. But let not his heart be troubled, he has a friend in heaven. The Eternal Son of God will never desert him. The angels of mercy smile upon his footsteps, and hail his approach to their peaceful mansions. There charity never ends. There he will celebrate in songs of triumph the joys of truth and of righteousness He will inherit the affection of the good, and join in those eternal prayers which rise to the throne of mercy from one blessed and united family.

Another example of trouble and distress in the history of man is that anxiety which every parent must feel under the embarrassment of a numerous and unprovided offspring. He has much to care for. This is a world of vice, and disease, and misfortune. The death of a child may bring affliction, but what is worse, the corruption of a child may bring infamy and disgrace upon his family. The love of parents never leaves their children. From the cry of feeble infancy to the strength and the independence of manhood, it follows after them, and shares in all their joys and in all their anxieties. They go abroad into the world, and the hearts of their

parents go abroad along with them. The warmth of a mother's affection can never desert them: she hears the howling of the midnight storm, and prays that Heaven would watch over the safety of her children. Happy the day of their return, when the old man gets his sons and his daughters around him. They are his staff in the years of his infirmity. Sweet to his soul is the hour of family devotion—when he rises in gratitude to heaven for giving peace to his last days—when he prays God that He would take care of his children, that they may live to carry him to the burial-place of his fathers, and that they may all rise again to rejoice forever in our Redeemer's kingdom.

"Then kneeling down to heaven's eternal King—
The Saint, the Father, and the husband prays;
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That thus they all shall meet in better days."

SERMON IV.

*Farewell Discourse at Cavers.**

"Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness."—TITUS i. 1.

IT has been insinuated to the prejudice of our religion, that its effects are far from corresponding with the magnificent anticipations of its first founders. They predicted that in the establishment of Christianity we would enjoy the reign of benevolence and peace. But let us survey the broad aspect of the world and its inhabitants—the ambition which involves it in the miseries of war—the selfishness which is unmoved by the plaintive cry of distress—the deceit which fills the earth with the exclamations of the injured—the cruelty which feasts on spectacles of pain—the licentiousness which degenerates a people, as it withers the graces of youthful modesty—the superstition which in its groveling subjection to externals deserts the manly and respectable virtues of social life—surely wickedness aboundeth in the land, and the cry thereof ascendeth unto heaven. Are these the boasted effects of religion—of that religion which was to extend through the world the triumphs of truth and virtue—of that religion which announced peace on earth and good-will to the children of men; and which promised to unite the world into one family by the sacred law of love? For what purpose that illustrious succession of prophets who appeared to alleviate the gloom and ignorance of antiquity? For what purpose did the Son of God descend from the celestial abodes of love and of virtue—live amid the sufferings of persecution and injustice, and die a martyr to that cause He had so nobly defended? Even now, thought we possess the sacred treasure of His instructions—though refined by all the improvements of art—though educated in all the wisdom of the ancients—even now we exhibit the vices which disgraced an age of ignorance and barbarity. To palliate, however, the enormity of the picture, it may be urged that the most important effects of Christianity are from their nature invisible, while the prominent features of vice must strike the observation of the most superficial and indifferent. Vice stalks abroad, and exposes its shameless forehead in the face of day. It attracts attention by the glaring deformity of its character—by the tumultuous disorder it creates in so-

* The latter months of Dr. Chalmers' connection with Cavers were engrossed with the preparations for the ensuing winter, during which he taught the Mathematical Classes in the University of St. Andrews. These preparations, and perhaps also the hurry of separation, have left evident marks of haste upon this farewell discourse. The reader, besides, will notice that in two instances an "&c." is placed at the end of a paragraph. This mark frequently occurs in the manuscript of the earlier sermons, indicating the insertion at the time of delivery of some favorite passage previously written and committed to memory. A sermon so hurriedly written, so incomplete, so fragmentary as that which follows, should not have been inserted had it not been that a comparison of its closing address, with the other farewell discourses given in this volume, promotes so largely one of the leading purposes of the present publication.

ciety—by the outcry of those whom it injures—by the transitory splendour of its career—and by the disgraceful ignominy of its fall. Virtue seeks the shade; it shrinks from applause; it delights in peaceful, unostentatious retirement. To find virtue we must seek for it, because it shuns observation. Virtue is humble and unambitious of praise; it doeth good in secret; it is content with the gratitude of those orphans whom it shelters—of those aged to whose sickness it administers—of that family whom it rescues from want. It seeks something nobler than the applause of men. Amid the sufferings of contempt and injustice it is supported by the testimony of its own conscience, and by the prospect of that day when it shall be restored to its honours and invested with the glories of an immortal crown.

But though these considerations may seem in part to alleviate the darkness of the picture, and to console our feelings amid the multiplied displays of human vice, yet truth and justice force us to proclaim the affecting depravity of man. The more we extend our acquaintance with human life, the more we see of villany in all its varieties. Here one feasting on the spoils of injustice and oppression—there another plotting his wiles of seduction; here one under the mask of friendship broods over dark and deceitful intentions—there another disguises the vices of his character in the parade and solemnity of religious observances; here parents living on the infamy of their children—there children afflicting the old age of their parents by their ingratitude. Who can enumerate the endless varieties of human guilt? Now envy sickens at the prospect of another's bliss—now calumny delights to spread its insidious poison—now licentiousness grovels in the low haunts of pollution—now cruelty rejoices in the crash of families. Yes, we have often heard the instructors of religion reproached for their sloth and indifference; but let critics remember that the scanty produce of the harvest may be imputed to the unmanageable nature of the soil as well as to the indolence of the husbandman; let them remember that the great obstacles to the advancement of religion exist among themselves; in the perverseness of their own character; in the restraints which their prejudices impose upon the efforts of pure and enlightened teachers; in their determined opposition to the practical and improving part of Christianity; in the baneful influence of that spurious and perverted orthodoxy which silences the remonstrances of conscience, and gives impunity to guilt. The business of a Christian minister is to hold up vice to infamy, and to denounce the thunders of heaven on the presumptuous. He should tremble to prostitute the honours of his Master's name by employing it to charm the wicked into security, and to save them from the troublesome restrictions of duty. He should scorn to lower the dignity of the pulpit by converting it into a vehicle of licentious instruction; and for whom?—to please the vilest and the meanest of mankind. He should impress upon their feelings that all the parade of external ordinances will not save the presumptuously wicked from the horrors of their impending punishment. No; let them strive to get to heaven as they may by their punctualities and their externals—let them sit at the table of the Lord—let them drink of that wine which is the symbol of a Redeemer's blood—all their sighs and tears and heavenly aspirations will avail them nothing while they retain the deceitful malignity of their characters. No; the supernatural charms they ascribe to the sacramental cup will no more avail than the spells of conjurors or the delusions of witchcraft. They may eat and drink and retire from the ordinance of the Supper with the deceitful assurance of the Almighty's favour; but tremble, O hypocrites, you have drunk the poison of the soul; you have tasted the seeds of disease and death and everlasting destruction, &c.

However much the Church of Scotland may have suffered from the contempt and censure of its adversaries, there is one part of its constitution which will ever be admired by those who entertain a sincere and enlightened attachment to religion—that which ensures the independent provision of its ministers. When a teacher of religion

derives his support from the spontaneous liberality of that congregation over which he presides, the chief care of his heart is often to please and not to instruct them—to flatter the vices of the rich, because he has much to expect from their bounty—to flatter the vices of the poor, because they compensate by their numbers for the smallness of their individual contributions. What can be expected from the efforts of an instructor fettered as he is by such shameful and humiliating restraints? It is in vain to look to him as the dignified and intrepid champion of pure Christianity; it is vain to hope that through his manly and disinterested efforts we shall behold the downfall of those corruptions which were grafted on the religion of Jesus in the dark ages of superstition. His instructions will not dispel prejudices but confirm them; will not correct the prevailing vices of sentiment but perpetuate the reign of ignorance and error, &c.

On terminating the short career of my labours as your religious instructor, it is natural to inquire what has been accomplished. We refer the answer to your own hearts. It will be declared in your future conduct and conversation. Much must have been imperfectly understood, much has been forgotten, much may have excited a momentary impression of goodness, but an impression which has now been effaced amid the bustle and temptations of the world. Some we hope may have produced the fruits of righteousness and life everlasting. Have virtuous resolutions been confirmed? Has guilt been appalled in its career? Has the despair of the penitent been revived to confidence and joy? Has the gloom of affliction been brightened by the consoling prospects of immortality? Have the instructions you have heard been useful in protecting the young and inexperienced from the dangers of an ensnaring example, and from the artifices of an intriguing villany? Have they been useful in alarming the careless indifference of parents to the moral and religious education of their offspring, and in teaching children to respect the authority of age? Have they been useful in humbling the pride of oppression, in exposing to contempt the infamy of falsehood, in detecting the baseness of calumny, or in impressing the terrors of vengeance on the determined impenitence of guilt? Have they been useful in alarming the impious security of the wicked, in teaching them that all creeds and all ordinances are unable to shelter them from judgment, and that their only refuge is a sincere and effectual repentance? Have they been useful in inspiring gratitude to Him who for our sakes lived a life of suffering and died a death of ignominy, whose morality has improved and adorned the face of society, and whose doctrines have ennobled the existence of man by unfolding to him the prospects of his immortal destiny! These are triumphs more ennobling to the teacher of virtue than all the splendour of opulence, or than all the authority of power. They will support his footsteps amid the storms of this dreary and tempestuous world: they will cheer the gloomy desolation of age, and be a sweet remembrance in the hour of death.

Let our last words be those of tenderness and affection. Let our parting admonition be reserved as the lecacy of friendship. You are in a world of care and suffering—now labouring under the embarrassments of poverty, now afflicted with the disgrace and ingratitude of children, now pining in the infirmity of disease, and now oppressed by the insolence of power. Hold fast to religion. It will console you amid the ills and perplexities of life; it will be unto you as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; it will bless you in the evening of your days, and conduct you to the glories of an eternal world.

August 28, 1802.

SERMON V.

*Fast-Day Sermon.**

"Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."—PSALM XXVII. 3.

IT is not my object to enter into any political discussion. The situation of the country is, I believe, forced upon us by the necessity of circumstances. It is a situation from which the most sincere and anxious efforts of Government could not have relieved us. It is a situation which I ascribe to no misconduct of Ministers—to no want of vigour or of sincerity—to no injurious encroachment on our part on the rights and privileges of other countries. It is a situation which I ascribe to the insolence of a haughty and resentful ambition—of an ambition which no sacrifice can appease—of an ambition which grasps at universal empire, and threatens to erect its throne over the prostrated liberties of Europe. At all events, it is a situation to be deplored. Our own country may become the theatre of blood and of violence. The widows and orphans of the slain may attest the numbers who have fallen in the cause of patriotism. Think not that the voice of pity will soften the destructive career of the invader. You have nothing to expect from the cannibal banditti of France: they have beasts of iron; they are hot from the plunder of other countries; they are trained to carnage and desolation; they have been taught to rejoice in the outcry of massacre, and to fly like bloodhounds to those towns and villages which their generals may have marked out for destruction.

A year is scarcely elapsed since we were called upon to commemorate an event of such grand and obvious importance—so eminently conducive to the interests of millions that the friends of humanity rejoiced, and Christians sent up to the throne of mercy their acclamations of gratitude, and in the transports of a patriotic enthusiasm forgot the interests and the virulence of party. Such was the event we had then to commemorate—not the delusive splendors of victory—not the phantom of national glory which serves to dazzle but not to exhilarate—not the glare and triumph of conquest to amuse a giddy and unthinking multitude. It was something more substantial—more felt in its operation on the interests of the country—more diffusive of its benefits through the walks of life and of business—more joyous to homes and to families. It was the re establishment of peace among the nations. It was a respite from those evils which had desolated the unhappy regions of Europe. It was an end to the calamities of war, and to the restless anxiety of parents and of friends, who implored the protecting hand of Providence over the scenes of danger. In describing the miseries of war, shall I present to your imaginations scenes to which Britain has long been a stranger; contending armies met upon the awful work of death; men unknown to each other bent upon mutual destruction; the earth

* I am indebted for the following sermon to David Gillespie, Esq., of Mountquhannie. His father was one of the principal heritors in the parish of Kilmany, and many memorials survive at once of his early appreciation of the character and talents of his minister, and of Dr. Chalmers' grateful sense at the time, and affectionate remembrances ever afterward, of the kind attentions of his heritor. It could not have been possible for any one to have listened to this sermon without emotion. There were chords in the heart of its humblest hearer which it must have caused thrillingly to vibrate. But Mr. Gillespie was one of the very few hearers of it who could estimate its literary merits. Struck with these, he solicited a copy of it—the only one now remaining, the original not having been preserved. It fixes its own date; reference occurs in it to the Thanksgiving Day which, in the summer of the preceding year, was appointed to be observed in acknowledgement of the general peace secured by the treaty of Amiens. That treaty was signed in March 1802. The war broke out again in May 1803, and Thursday, the 20th day of the October following, was, by public appointment, observed throughout Scotland as a Fast-day, not only on account of the renewal of hostilities between this country and France, but mainly because of that threat of invasion which Bonaparte hung over England, and by which the heart of the whole island was convulsed. It must have been upon this occasion—only a few months, therefore, after Dr. Chalmers' settlement at Kilmany—that this sermon was preached.

bathed in the blood of thousands; and the cries of the wounded mingling with the shouts and the exultation of victory? Shall we walk over the fields of the slain, and survey the victims of a lawless ambition? One whom the romantic visions of glory had allured from the house of his fathers; who had resigned all the comforts and endearments of home at the call of honour: his career is run; no more shall he gladden the hearts of his friends by the tidings of his welfare. Heedless of the event, they cherish the fond hope of his return; but he has breathed his last afar from the abode of his infancy, without a friend to soothe his departure, or to protect his expiring moments from the cold blasts of midnight. Who can detail the pains and sufferings of a military life: now surrounded with the infection of an hospital; now pining in the famine of a siege; now tossed on the fury of the tempest; now languishing in the solitude of a prison? Who does not shudder at the destructive progress of an invading army? Galled with difficulties, inflamed with resistance, aroused by the blood of their fellow-companions to the stern purpose of revenge. Nor age can disarm their fury, nor beauty arrest their violence. The sword spreads its desolation among the families; the land is filled with the houses of mourning; the sounds of joy are for years extinguished, and the seats of industry converted into the abodes of silence and grief.

We are not yet relieved from these fearful apprehensions. The haughty and uncontrolable despot of France has not agreed to suspend his ambition, or to cease from troubling the repose of mankind. The nations of Europe hailed the approaching steps of peace with the acclamations of transport; but they have scarce had time to breathe from the toils and the fury of contention. The dire effusion of human blood has not been able to restrain the insolence of power—to control the vindictive fury of war—or to humble the lofty pride of ambition. But it is an ambition which shall not prevail. We trust in the unanimous resistance of a great and a high-spirited country. We trust in the integrity of our cause. We trust in the valour of our countrymen: they will not fear to die in the animating cause of patriotism. We trust in the wisdom of our statesmen; they will blow the trumpet of war with the voice of irresistible eloquence. We trust in the skill of our commanders; they will inspire us with confidence, and lead us on to emulation and to victory.

The best security that a government can enjoy is in the hearts and sentiments of the people. In this point of view our situation is not so alarming as it was at the commencement of the French Revolution. An unbridled licentiousness of principle threatened the order and the security of social life. A perverted system of morality went far to exterminate the reign of justice. A contempt for the sacred institution of religion hardened the sensibilities against every amiable and tender impression. But experience has at length dispelled the magic of speculation. Its votaries have been forced, though with reluctance, to acknowledge that the delusions of fancy had led them astray, and that they erred in denouncing those virtues which have supported the prosperity of ages. Even the enlightened philosophers of the modern school look back on the extravagance of their former principles as the inexperience of enthusiasm and folly, and are heard to revere the home-bred maxims of their forefathers, though unaccompanied with the charms of novelty, the splendour of eloquence, or the magnificence of system.

From the recollection of past scenes there is a lesson we would wish to impress on all countries and on all people—a lesson recommended by the awful sanction of experience—a lesson written in the blood of thousands; the danger of heedless innovation, the fury of an irritated populace, though originally excited by the best of motives, and directed to the best of purposes. Who is there so seduced by the hypocrisy of profession as to look back with an approving eye on the whole progress of the French Revolution—on the disgraceful scenes of cruelty which were conducted under the semblance of patriotism and public zeal—on that murderous spirit which actuated the rulers, and expended its fury on the innocent victims of injustice?

Who is there so deluded by the modern systems of virtue as to suppress his abhorrence at their flagrant violations of truth, at their wanton invasion of a harmless and unresisting people, at that refined insincerity of character which, amid the praises of liberty, and the ardent declamations of humanity and feeling, is directing all its efforts against the independence of an outraged country? Alas! how much they have suffered, and how far they are behind us in all that conduces to the substantial prosperity of a nation: in stability of government, in the purity of its justice, in a quick and enlightened impression of the rights of man, in the energy of the public voice, and in contempt for oppression. In the pure administration of justice, in the progress of sentiment and character, in the individual reformation of a people, we discover a more substantial security against the infringements of rights, than in all the parade of constitutions, and in all the mockery of forms. Why fight for a republic—since the insolence of power will ever be able to establish the reign of despotism over a timid and an ignorant people, and all the authority of laws will be unable to restrain it. Why rejoice in the blood of kings—since a watchful and enlightened public will ever restrain the abuses of power, though emblazoned in all the splendour of titles, and supported by all the jurisprudence of antiquity. Let us never despair of the future improvement of mankind; let us never relax in our efforts to hasten the reign of perfection. But let us direct these efforts aright; not by instruments of violence, not by arousing the fury of a vindictive and as yet unenlightened populace not by infringing on the sacred rights of property, not by trampling on the distinctions of rank. There is a certain point in the progress of national improvement which renders the degradation of a country impossible, and accelerates all its future advances in light and in liberty. That point we seem to have gained. It consists in the perfection of the national character—a perfection which renders it respectable in the eye of the rulers, and gives an energy to its opinions sufficient to resist every flagrant violation of justice or freedom. Let us never despair of the unfailing efficacy of knowledge in conducting to the proudest summits of national felicity. Let every improvement be effected, not by the tumults of sedition or the agitations of party, but by the silent and progressive labours of instruction. Let us direct our efforts to the improvement of individual character, as the most solid and substantial foundation of public prosperity, to remove those prejudices in which ignorance involes the understanding, to dispel those unhappy and malignant impressions which separate the different orders of the community, and above all, to diffuse the admiration of virtue by the charms of our private example. These will secure to the Government of Britain the obedience of a free and a willing people, who know how to yield a ready acquiescence in the restrictions of a just and useful authority, and to sacrifice the petty competitions of interest and opinion to that unanimity which is the boast and protection of a country.

The situation of the country calls aloud for the unanimity of its inhabitants. We are not called upon to defend any particular order of men. We are not called upon to defend the principles and views of any party. We are not called upon to defend the possessions of the wealthy, or the rank of the noble. It is to defend ourselves. It is to defend the country from massacre: it is to defend it from the insolence of a brutal and unfeeling soldiery. Let it not be said that this is the cause of the great or the wealthy. That cottage which shelters you from the storms of winter, should be as dear to you as the stately palace is to the chieftain who resides in it. That little garden which you cultivate for the use of your family should be as dear to you as the acres of an extensive domain are to its lordly proprietor. I have undergone several of the varieties of fortune. From the dependence of a child I have arrived through intermediate steps of preferment to a comfortable sufficiency of circumstances. When occupying the humbler situations of life, I felt the same interest in defense of the country that I do at present, the same attachment to the cause of civil and religious security,

the same contempt for oppression, the same stubborn and unbroken spirit of independence, the same determined opposition both to domestic tyranny and to the ignominy of a foreign yoke. True, I had little to lose, but that little was all that belonged to me. It supplied all the stores of my enjoyment. It filled up the measure of my humble and unambitious desires; and had it fallen a sacrifice to the rapacity of an invading army, it would have afflicted me with equal severity as the destruction of the house which I now occupy, of the land which I now cultivate, of the emoluments of the office which I now exercise—an office to the duties of which the remainder of my days may probably be consecrated. Let it not be said that you have no interest in the defence of the country. You may live in a straw-built shed, and have an equal interest with him who triumphs in all the magnificence of wealth, and is invested with the proudest honors of nobility. You may have children whose infancy you have protected, and to whose manhood you look forward as the support and consolation of your declining years. You may have parents whose age requires your protection; for even age will not soften the cruelty of your relentless enemies.

Let it not be said that discussions like these are a prostitution of the dignity of the pulpit, or an impertinent deviation from our official character, to lend the authority of our profession to the aid of party, or to employ it in strengthening the yoke of despotism over an enslaved and persecuted people. I hope in God there is not a man among us who would not willingly renounce the smiles of the great and the patronage of power, rather than concur in supporting the measures of an arbitrary and oppressive government. We come forward not in the spirit of an accommodating policy. We come forward because it is the dictate of our own hearts, and the dictate of our own opinions. We come forward because we conceive it to be the duty of every good man in the present critical and alarming circumstances of the country. We come forward because it is the cause of patriotism. It is the cause of civil and religious liberty. It is the cause of that Christianity that has been transmitted to us from our ancestors, and that we have been taught from our infancy to cherish and revere. Some of you may have heard of Lavater; he was a clergyman of the once free and independent country of Switzerland. He was one of the most eminent literary characters of his age. He had a mind formed for the profoundest investigations of science, and a heart animated by that mild and generous benevolence which the faith of Christianity inspires. He was at first a keen supporter of the French Revolution; he defended it by his writings, he hailed it as the commencement of a grand era—when liberty, and science, and virtue would expand their triumphs and erect an omnipotent empire. But the picture was soon changed. A few years had scarcely elapsed when he saw through the magic that had bewitched him. His own country was invaded by the French troops, and fell a prey to the most unexampled atrocities. In his retreat he wrote a pamphlet which I have myself seen.* He here discovers all the ardor of his patriotic mind, in the exclamations of disappointed benevolence, and in the afflicting regrets with which he contemplates the ruin of his countrymen.

Let us not tremble at the dangers which surround us. Let us not be afraid though an enemy should encamp against us. What, in the name of Heaven!—is it for us to resign our lives and our liberties to the insolence of lawless ambition! Is it for us to surrender those sacred privileges which were cemented by the blood of our ancestors! The pulse of a Briton beats high in the cause of independence. A contempt for oppression is the proudest sentiment of his heart. He has sucked it from his infancy; it glows even in the humblest retreats of poverty; it ennobles the lowest retirements of life. Amid the shocks of misfortune he sustains the dignity of an unbroken spirit; he rejoices in his conscious importance,

* The pamphlet here alluded to is in all likelihood the one entitled "Remonstrance addressed to the Executive Directory of the French Republic against the Invasion of Switzerland. By John Caspar Lavater London, 1798."

not as a favourite of fortune, not as the lordling of an extensive domain who exercises the reign of caprice over a tribe of dependents, not as the child of hereditary grandeur who can appeal to the honours of a remote and illustrious ancestry—he rejoices in his importance as a man—as a man whose rights are revered by the laws of his country, and whose virtues will be hailed by the voice of an applauding public. In a country such as this we have nothing to fear from the insolence of power; for it must submit to the severity of an impartial justice. In a country such as this we have nothing to fear from the corruption of our tribunals; for they feel that they are under the control of public opinion, and that all the splendour of official importance is unable to protect their injustice from the frown of a generous and enlightened people. In a country such as this we have nothing to fear from the efforts of sedition; for our common interests engage us to oppose it, and to control the violence of its deluded votaries. In a country such as this we have nothing to fear from the frenzy of revolutionary violence; for in the experience of our present blessings the unanimous sense of the people would rise to resist it. In a country such as this we have nothing to fear from the oppressions of an arbitrary government; for our rulers have learned to respect the energy of the public voice, and feel that their best security is in the hearts of their subjects. And shall such a country turn pale at the approach of an invader? Shall its patriotism wither and die in the hour of danger? Will it surrender that venerable system of law that has been created by the wisdom of ages? Will it surrender that throne which has been adorned by the private virtues of him who holds it? Will it surrender that Christianity which has been transmitted to us from our ancestors, and which we have been taught from our infancy to cherish and revere? Will it surrender those fields which the industry of its inhabitants has enriched with the fairest stores of cultivation? Will it surrender its towns and villages to destruction? Will it surrender its inhabitants to massacre? Will it surrender its homes to the insolence of a brutal and unfeeling soldiery? No. Let the invader attempt it when he may, he will attempt it to his destruction. The pride of an indignant country will rise to overthrow the purposes of his ambition, and the splendour of his past victories will be tarnished in the disgrace that awaits him.

If true to ourselves we have nothing to fear from the insulting menaces of France. And can I for a moment cherish the disgraceful supposition—can I for a moment suppose that there is a man among us, who would suffer his mind to be enfeebled by the cowardly apprehensions of danger? Can I for a moment suppose that there is a man among us who, in the present alarming circumstances, would prove false to the cause of his country? I would sooner open my door to the savage and murderous banditti of France, than admit such a man into my confidence. Against an open enemy I can guard myself; he warns me of my danger; he throws me into a posture of defence, and I bid defiance to his rage. But the case is different with these insidious and designing men who lurk in the bosom of the country. They are snakes in the grass. They are asps of malignity whom we cherish in our bosoms. They are capable of violating the most sacred oaths, and betraying the best of friendships. Under the mask of patriotism they meditate their designs of treachery; and that country which, if firm and united, would bid defiance to the combined hostility of Europe, is delivered up a prey to all the horrors of insurrection. But I am satisfied that no such spirit exists in our neighbourhood. I am satisfied that the breast of every man who now hears me is animated by a feeling of the purest patriotism—that the breast of every man who now hears me feels the proudest disdain that France, or any power under heaven, should insult our independence, and threaten to invade the peace of our dwellings.

May that day in which Bonaparte ascends the throne of Britain be the last of my existence; may I be the first to ascend the scaffold he erects to extinguish the worth and spirit of the country; may my blood mingle with

the blood of patriots; and may I die at the foot of that altar on which British independence is to be the victim. The future year is big with wonders. It may involve us in all the horrors of a desolating war. It may decide the complexion of the civilized world. It may decide the future tranquility of ages. It may give an awful lesson to ambition; and teach the nations of Europe what it is to invade the shores of a great and a high-spirited country.

SERMON VI.

*Courteousness.**

"Be courteous."—1 PETER iii. 8.

COURTEOUSNESS is the same with what in common language would be called civility of manners; but as the mind is often a slave to the imposition of words, it is necessary to distinguish it from something else, which, though very like it in sound, is very different from it in sense and in significancy. Let it be distinctly understood, then, that to be courteous is one thing, and to be courtly is another. The one refers to the disposition—the other to the external behaviour. The one is a virtue—the other is an accomplishment. The one is grace of character: it resides in the soul, and consists in the benevolence of an amiable temper. The other is grace of manner: it may be seen in the outward appearance, and consists in the elegance of a fashionable exterior. A man may be courteous without being courtly. To learn the virtue of the text, it is not necessary to go to court, or to be practiced in the ceremonies of fine and polished society. Courteousness is the virtue of all ranks: it may be seen in the cottage as well as in the palace; in the artificer's shop as well as in the gay and fashionable assembly; in the awkwardness of a homely and untutored peasant, as well as in the refined condescension of a prince who wakens rapture in every heart, and spreads fascination and joy around his circle of delighted visitors. It is of importance not to confound what is so essentially different. A man may have civility without a particle of elegance, and a man may have elegance without a particle of civility. There is a set of people whom I can not bear—the pinks of fashionable propriety—whose every word is precise, and whose every movement is unexceptionable; but who, though versed in all the categories of polite behaviour, have not a particle of soul or of cordiality about them. We allow that their manners may be abundantly correct. There may be elegance in every gesture, and gracefulness in every position; not a smile out of place, and not a step that would not bear the measurement of the severest scrutiny. This is all very fine; but what I want is the heart and the gayety of social intercourse—the frankness that spreads ease and animation around it—the eye that speaks affability to all, that chases timidity from every bosom, and tells every man in the company to be confident and happy. This

* During the two years which elapsed from the time at which the following discourse was written, (July 2, 1808) till the period of that great revolution in his religious sentiments which took place in the years 1810 and 1811, this sermon was very frequently preached by, and was a special favorite of, its author. He retained, indeed, a strong partiality for it to the last, and delighted to tell of the incident to which it owed its birth. Walking on one of the public roads in Kilmany, he had come in sight of a family, the members of which were thus distributed. A few paces in advance—unburdened, his hands thrust lazily into his pockets, in his slouching gait having all the air of a man very much at his ease—strode on the husband. Behind—bent down, "a bairn in one hand, and a bundle in the other"—the wearied wife and mother was struggling to keep pace with him. A perfect hurricane of indignation was awakened in the breast of Dr. Chalmers, when, on overtaking the group, he heard the man vehemently curse back at his wife as he ordered her to "come along." Dr. Chalmers never told how that hurricane discharged itself, or in what terms he administered the well-merited rebuke. Thought, however, as well as emotion, was excited: in contrast with the scene of rude barbarity he had witnessed, the pleasures and benefits of courteousness arose in vivid colouring before his eye. He went home—sat down to write. The fruit of that forenoon's incident, and that evening's study is given in the discourse which follows.

is what I conceive to be the virtue of the text, and not the sickening formality of those who walk by rule, and would reduce the whole of human life to a wire-bound system of misery and constraint.

Civility has been called one of the lesser virtues of the social character. It does not stand so high in the order of social duty as virtue or humanity. It may be the same in principle, but it is different in the display. It may not be so essential to the constitution of society, but it comprises a thousand engaging attentions which go far to keep society together, and confer an exquisite charm on the walks of social intercourse.

It may be difficult to assign a precise limit between civility and the other virtues of the social character. It is saying too much to say that to be civil is to lay yourself out for the accommodation of a neighbour. You accommodate the poor with money, yet nobody would say that this was doing a piece of civility; it is dignified with the higher appellation of humanity. You accommodate another when you lend your name to support the tottering credit of an acquaintance; yet nobody will say that it is civil, but that it is generous and beneficent. Civility, in fact, is confined to those lesser attentions which require no material sacrifice of time, or money, or interest; those little offices of kindness which can be discharged without loss and without trouble, which call for no painful exertion, and bring no sensible inconvenience along with them. To point the road to an inquiring traveler; to step forward and relieve the ignorance or the embarrassment of a stranger; to make soothing inquiries after the sickness which reigns in an adjoining family; to maintain a series of respectful attentions, and to carry the expression of kindness in your look and tone and general conversation—these are so many obvious examples of civility—a virtue in the observance of which you may be said to incur no fatigue, to surrender no interest, and to submit to no sacrifice. To lend money in order to relieve the embarrassments of an unfortunate family is an example rather of humanity; for in this act of kindness you risk a material interest—the money may never be restored, and you secretly commit it to some future exercise of generosity to cancel the obligation. To lend books, again, in order to amuse the solitude of a convalescent neighbour, is an example of civility; for in this act of kindness you endanger no material interest, you apprehend no loss, no inconvenience—you feel confident that the books will be restored, and you have the satisfaction of spreading enjoyment around you at an expense that is scarcely felt, and need never be complained of. You will observe, then, that civility approaches to the higher exercises of generosity by a limit which it is almost impossible to define with precision. Both of them point to a neighbour's happiness and a neighbour's accommodation; but in the one case you have to make a greater sacrifice of your own personal ease or personal advantage. Both of them have their foundation in a principle of kindness; but to be generous you must make some important sacrifice—to be civil the sacrifice must be so small as to encroach upon no material convenience, and to interfere with no serious pursuit of business or interest.

The advantages of civility may be referred to two general heads—1. The happiness which the very exercise of this virtue communicates to him who practices it; and, 2. The happiness which it communicates to those who are the objects of it. First, then, as to the happiness which springs from the exercise of this virtue, I appeal to the experience of every generous bosom, if the exercise of kindness does not leave a sweet satisfaction behind it; and if it has never felt that harmony which reigns in the soul after it indulges in a benevolent affection. I appeal to the experience of every generous bosom, if it is not more pleasant to return a civil answer to the inquiries of a traveler than to triumph in his helplessness, or to rejoice in his ignorance and his embarrassment. I appeal to the experience of every generous bosom if it is not more pleasant to dissipate the awkwardness of an inferior by the affability of our manners than to humble him into timidity, or to throw him at a mortifying distance by the *hauteur* and stiffness of our deportment. The benevo-

lent Author of our frames has annexed a joy to every virtuous exercise of the heart; there is a pleasure accompanying the cordiality of good wishes and benevolent intentions. It may be difficult to describe the feeling; it is perhaps too simple to be taken to pieces and made the subject of a formal explanation; but every child of nature can lend his testimony to the reality of its existence. There is always a pleasure accompanying the exercise of power, and the pleasure is heightened to a tenfold degree when this power is directed to the purposes of beneficence. Now there is not a man among us who is not in some degree invested with such a power. Every man among us has the power of diffusing satisfaction around him by the civility of his manners; he has it in his power to look with a brother's eye, and to gladden every bosom by the engaging affability of his deportment. I am not speaking of the happiness he communicates to others; I speak of the happiness he is providing for himself; I am telling him of the satisfaction of his own feelings, and of the joy that springs in the solitude of his own bosom when it is tuned to the purposes of kindness.

Perhaps civility is more allied with a liberal and expanded principle of humanity than any other virtue of the social character. You may be just, but this justice is confined to the few individuals with whom you are connected in the walks of business; you may be generous, but this generosity is confined to the particular cases of distress which come under your observation; you may be patriotic, but this patriotism is confined to the narrow limits of the country in which you were born. The virtue of civility knows no exceptions. It embraces all; it asks no questions; nor does it hesitate and delay till it has ascertained its object. Civility is a general habit of kindness; it requires no particular claim upon its attentions. Enough for it that the object before you is a man. He may be an entire stranger; but this it conceives to be an additional call upon its exercise. The hurry of traveling supplies you with a thousand examples of such rapid intercourse, where you may never meet again till you meet in heaven, but where each has made the other happy by the interchange of obliging expressions, and an hour spent in the luxury of kindness. Now it is this circumstance which gives the virtue of civility such an exalted place in my estimation—the enlargement of that principle upon which it is founded, and the grandeur of that theatre in which it expatiates. The principle is universal good will, and the theatre is the world. There is something generous and expanding in the principle. It has no petty consideration to restrain it in its exercise; it calls for no claim, no terms of admittance; it is not your family or your neighbourhood that introduces you to its attentions. Enough for it that you belong to the species—that you are a brother of the same nature—that you have a bosom which can be soothed by the accents of kindness, and a heart that feels the attentions of another to be gracious. Now the point which I am at present insisting upon is, that the exercise of such a principle confers happiness upon its possessor—that it carries along with it a series of the most animating and delightful sensations—that the tone of mind which accompanies the exercise of kindness is in the highest degree favourable to enjoyment—that good will is a pleasurable feeling—and that cheerfulness is ever the inheritance of him who moves along with his affections flying before him; with every feeling tuned to benevolence, and every wish directed to the happiness of others.

I am not calling upon you to make any romantic sacrifice, to give your goods to feed the poor, or to surrender a single portion of that time which interest tells you should be directed to the engagements of business. I am only calling upon you to cultivate that habitual kindness of spirit which discharges itself in the thousand little attentions of civility. I only call upon you to enter with cheerfulness into these minuter offices of kindness which come in your way, and can be performed without trouble and without inconvenience. I only call upon you to come forward with the simple offering of kind looks and obliging expressions—to chase away the embarrassments of the awkward by the affability of your manners—and to de

light the hearts of all around you by the consciousness that they possess your respect and tenderness. I protest that however difficult to describe the sensation, there is something in the feeling of a hearty good will to another's happiness which is in the highest degree animating and delightful—that it blesses him who gives as well as him who receives it—that it is a spring of the most genial satisfaction to all who cherish it—and that it is always sure to throw even into the solitude of a man's bosom the sunshine of tranquillity and cheerfulness. What a delightful contrast to those melancholy beings who have no heart—who never tasted the joys of cordiality, whose bosoms never warmed to the animating spectacle of another's bliss and another's gayety, who hedge themselves round with a set of the most freezing and repulsive ceremonies, who suffer none to approach them with confidence, who roll themselves up in their own solitary grandeur, and give to pride and to solemnity those hours which should have been spent in the interchange of agreeable manners and the luxury of social affections. I know not whether to hate or to pity them; but certain it is that they debar themselves from the choicest of all luxuries, and a luxury which no good mind would be willing to forego. Certain it is that the luxury of social affections is better than the parade and solemnity of forms—and that the vanity of their own importance is but a wretched atonement for the loss of those pleasures which spring from the exercise of kindness, and a heart that loves to indulge in another's joy.

In addition to the pleasure which springs from the very exercise of civility, there are other advantages which I forbear particularly to insist upon. I know nothing that is more calculated than a kind and conciliating manner to propitiate friends and secure the good wishes of all around you. It is the most popular of all virtues. It will go further to gain the affections of men than the most splendid deeds of beneficence. By relieving my wants you make me feel the load of an obligation; I blush at the humility of my own dependence, and am thrown to a most mortifying distance from that superior being whose beneficence sustains me. An act of charity is an offering not to me but to my wants; an act of civility carries along with it a more immediate homage to myself. I am the object of charity because I need it; but I am the object of civility, not because I need it, but because I am thought to deserve it. There is on this account a soothing flattery in the attentions of civility that is far more grateful to the bosom of man than any other act or any other form of kindness which you choose to specify. It is not the favour which civility confers. The favour may of itself be a mere nothing—some obliging expression or some soothing and attentive inquiry. It is the respect and tenderness which an act of civility implies; it is the delightful consciousness that I possess the sympathy of another's bosom. These are the feelings which give such a delicate charm to the exercises of civility, and bestow upon it a power over the affections of men which all the patronage of the great and all the charities of opulence can never equal. In addition to all this, let me also mention that the exercise of civility costs you nothing. It calls for no sacrifice of time, or money, or interest. There is nothing to fatigue or to consume you in this delightful exercise. It is the spontaneous flow of good affections, and consists in those little offices of kindness which can be discharged without trouble, and leave no loss or inconvenience behind them.

I now proceed to the second head of discourse, where I am to examine the happiness which civility confers upon those who are the objects of it. It is like the dew which droppeth upon the grass beneath. It blesses him who gives and him who receives it. The pleasure which we feel in receiving a kindness depends upon two causes: there is, first, the benefit conferred, and there is, secondly, the agreeable feeling which springs in every bosom from its being the object of another's benevolence. In relieving the wretchedness of extreme poverty, the first is the predominant cause of the pleasure which we communicate. We have conferred an important benefit. We have appeased hunger, or given shelter to the naked and defenceless. In discharging an office of civility,

again, the second is the predominant cause of the pleasure which we communicate. The benefit conferred may in itself have been of no consequence—a kind look or a respectful attention. The benefit may not be of such a kind as to better our circumstances, or bring along with it any other palpable advantage; but still there is a charm in the attentions of civility that is altogether independent of the benefit conferred. This charm lies in the consciousness of being the object of another's kindness, and in being supported by the cordiality of another's attentions. It is a very gross way of calculating the matter to estimate the enjoyment which springs from benevolence by the magnitude of the gift which it confers. Civility presents no gift, but it comes forward with a far more delightful offering—the offering of agreeable attentions, and a manner expressive of cordiality and friendship. I maintain that the exercise of this virtue is more conducive to the happiness of society than the most liberal and expensive charities. What is it that perpetuates the harmony and friendship of a neighbourhood? It is the interchange of respectful attentions, and the little endearing expressions of civility. What is it that creates quarrels, and fills the whole village with the uproar of controversy? It may sometimes be the cruelty of injustice, but it is far oftener the insolence of disdain, the sullenness of an unaccommodating manner, the mortifying negligence of those who count you unworthy of their attentions. What is it that throws a sunshine into the habitations of the wretched? Your charity relieves, but your civility revives them; it restores them to the dignity of the species, and makes them forget the cruelty of those humiliations which misfortune has entailed upon them. The meal which comes from the great man's house sustains them, and they try to be grateful for it; but gratitude comes at will, when they receive their forenoon visit from the loveliest of human beings, whose delight is in the dwellings of the poor, who loves to cheer them by her attentions, and to bless by the affability of her manners those humble cottages which surround the princely mansion of her father. Yes, there is something in the attentions of civility that is calculated to warm and to exhilarate the human bosom. I am not speaking of a gift or of a benefit; but there is something in the very sense of another's kindness that carries along with it the most gracious of enjoyments. Now the kindness of charity may hurt or may mortify its object; but the kindness of civility has no alloy. It carries along with it all the power and insinuation of the most delicate flattery. It is a clear and unmixed feeling, altogether purified from the grossness of obligation, and from those galling reflections which are ever sure to accompany a sense of dependence. If civility can do so much, why, in the name of tenderness, should we withhold it? why refuse so simple an offering at the shrine of humanity? why retire to the solitude of our own importance, and disdain to mingle in kindness with those who are brethren of the same nature and children of the same beneficent Creator? We all sprung from heaven, and to heaven we are all pointing. Why should we cast out by the way? why deny so easy a sacrifice as the sacrifice of civility? why refuse so simple an offering as the offering of agreeable manners, and a countenance lightened up by the smiles of brotherhood and affection? what is it that induces you to withhold so easy an offering?—are you afraid of committing your dignity by excessive condescension? It is very true that the kindness of a weak man often exposes him to ridicule. But I do not suppose you to be weak. What I want at present is to communicate to your feelings the temper of benevolence—and I take it for granted that you have sense enough to direct you in the exercise of this principle. There is certainly a way of descending to the exercises of civility, and in such a manner as to save your dignity and to sustain the importance of your character. A man, if he is weak, will render himself ridiculous in any direction, whether it be on the side of excessive kindness or excessive anxiety to keep up his importance. A man may render himself ridiculous by his excessive humility, and he may render himself as ridiculous by the excessive grandeur and solemnity of his manners. I know not whether to

laugh or to cry when I witness those ridiculous beings whose great effort and anxiety in this world is to keep up their dignity; who are so lofty and so inaccessible; who must not be touched; who shelter themselves under the defence of a stately ceremonial; and whose whole behaviour is only calculated to overpower the diffident, or cause those who have a sufficient degree of nerve and firmness to be indifferent about them. Let me never hear, then, the argument of ridicule employed to discourage the exercises of a kind and condescending civility. If people wish for amusement, I would direct them to the opposite extreme of character, and assure them that they will there meet with far better game for the exercise of ridicule. No; I would pity the weakness of those who were victims to an amiable but misguided benevolence of temper, while I would let out the full cry of ridicule against the wretched vanity of him who marches solemnly along, and thinks that by the stateliness of his manners he is to scatter awe and embarrassment around him.

I may observe, that less evil results from the exercise of civility than any other virtue of the social character. It is in the power of charity to corrupt its object; it may tempt him to indolence; it may lead him to renounce all dependence upon himself; it may nourish the meanness and depravity of his character; it may lead him to hate exertion, and to resign without a sigh the dignity of independence. It could be easily proved that if charity were carried to its utmost extent, it would unhinge the constitution of society. It would expel from the land the blessings of industry. Every man would repose on the beneficence of another. Every incitement to diligence would be destroyed. The evils of poverty would multiply to such an extent as to be beyond the power even of the most unbounded charity to redress them; and instead of an elysium of love and of plenty, the country would present the nauseating spectacle of sloth and beggary and corruption. There is no such danger attending the exercise of civility. It draws no dependence along with it; it gladdens the heart without corrupting it. Instead of degrading, it has rather the effect to cheer and elevate and sustain the character. I want not the charity of my neighbour so long as I can rely on the native independence of my own exertions; but I would like at all times to be supported by his friendship, to be delighted by the civility of his manners, and to rejoice in the maintenance of a soothing and agreeable fellowship.

I also observe that the power of diffusing happiness is not the exclusive inheritance of the rich. All are capable of it. The poorest of men can cheer me by his affection, or distress me by his hatred and contempt. He may not be able to relieve me by his wealth, but he is at least able to delight me by his civility. Every man is the dependent of another. A piece of neglect, even from the lowest and most contemptible of men, is fit to ruffle the tranquillity of my happiness; and a civil attention, even from the humblest of our kind, carries a most gracious and exhilarating influence along with it. Let me never hear, then, that the poor have nothing in their power. They have it in their power to give or to withhold civility of manners. They have it in their power to give or to withhold friendly attentions. They have it in their power to give or to withhold kind and obliging expressions. They have it in their power to give or to withhold the smiles of affection and the sincerity of a tender attachment. Let not these humble offerings of poverty be disregarded. The man of sentiment knows how to value them: he prizes them as the best deeds of beneficence. They lighten the weary anxieties of this world, and carry him on with a cheerful heart to the end of his journey.

July 2, 1808.

SERMON VII.

*Fast-Day Discourse.**

"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."—PROVERBS xxi. 1.

IT is consolatory to think that this earthly scene, in spite of the misery and apparent confusion which prevail in it, is under the absolute control of infinite wisdom—that the God who sitteth above and reigns in heaven, also presides over the destinies of this lower world—that every event in history is of His appointment—that every occurrence in the course of human affairs is in the order of His providence—that He reigns in the heart of man, and can control all its purposes—that the violence of human ambition is only an instrument which He employs, to carry on His government and accomplish the purposes of His wisdom. When we see combined in the same person the genius of an angel and the malignity of a tyrant—when we see a power that no human energy can resist, and this power directed to the slavery and degradation of the species—when we see strewed around his throne the mangled liberties of a generous and intrepid people—when we follow him in the brilliant career of his victories, and in the history of his guilty triumphs anticipate the new miseries which his ambition is to bring upon the world, it certainly brightens up the dreariness that lies before us when we think that he is only an instrument in the hand of the Almighty—that it is God that worketh in him to will and to do—that the heart of man is in the Lord's hand as the rivers of water, and that He turneth it wheresoever He will. It is the sublimest exercise of piety to refer everything around us to the wisdom of God—to acknowledge Him in all the events of His providence—to place our refuge in His wisdom in the evil days of darkness and disorder, and to rest our confidence on that Almighty Being who sitteth above, and presides in high authority over the theatre of human affairs. Such are the consolations of piety—such the elevation of heart which religion confers—an elevation which the world knoweth not, and which the tyrant of this world cannot take away. Life is short, and its anxieties are soon over. The glories even of the conqueror will soon find their hiding-place in the grave. In a few years, and that power which appals the world will feel all the weakness of mortality—the sentence of all must pursue him—the fate of all must overtake him; he must divest himself of his glories, and lie down with the meanest of his slaves—that ambition which aspires to the dominion of the whole earth, will at last have but a spot of dust to repose on—it will be cut short in the midst of its triumphs—it will sleep from all its anxieties, and be fast locked in the insensibility of death. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

We live in a busy and interesting period. Every year gives a new turn to the history of the world, and throws a new complexion over the aspect of political affairs. The wars of other times shrink into insignificance when compared with the grand contest which now embroils the whole of civilized society. They were paltry in their origin—they were trifling in their object—they were humble and insignificant in their consequences. A war of the last generation left the nations of Europe in the same relative situation in which it

* In February, 1809, shortly after the honourable but disastrous battle of Corunna, a national fast was kept—on the day of the observance of which the following sermon was delivered. In the fast-day sermon of 1803, the reader can scarcely fail to have been struck with the absence, not merely of any allusion to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but of any distinct recognition even of Divine Providence. In this fast-day of 1809, the supremacy of God and of His government is not only very fully acknowledged, but very earnestly insisted on. The contrast between the two discourses marks a stage in that progress which this volume is meant to trace.

found them; but war now is on a scale of magnitude that is quite unexampled in the history of modern times. Not to decide some point of jealousy or to secure some trifling possessions, it embraces a grander interest—it involves the great questions of Existence and Liberty. Every war is signalized with the wreck of some old empire and the establishment of a new one—all the visions of romance are authenticated in the realities which pass before us—the emigration of one royal family, the flight and the imprisonment of another, the degradation of a third to all the obscurity of private life—these are events which have ceased to astonish us because their novelty is over, and they are of a piece with those wonderful changes which the crowded history of these few years presents to our remembrance. Such a period as this, then, gives full scope for the exercise of piety. Let everything be referred to God; in this diversity of operations, let us remember that it is He who worketh all in all—let us recognize Him as the author of all these wonders—and amid this bewildering variety of objects, let us never lose sight of that mighty Being who sustains all and directs all. It is His judgments that are abroad in the world—it is His magnificent plans that are verging to their accomplishment—it is His system of beauty and order and wisdom, that is to proceed from this wild uproar of human passions. He can restrain the remainder of human wrath—He can allay the fury and the turbulence of human ambition—He can make order spring out of confusion, and attune every heart and every will to His purposes.

Let it not be disguised. There is ground for apprehension in the character and talents of the enemy. There is a wisdom in his politics, there is a power and a rapidity in his decisions, there is a mysterious energy in his character, there is a wealth and a population in his empire that are sufficient to account for that tide of success which has accompanied him in all his efforts against the imbecility of the old governments. The governments he had to contend with were old, and they had all the infirmities of age. They wanted that vigour and impulse and purity which a revolution communicates to every department of the State. With the one party we see an energy pervading every department of the public service—with the other we see the most important administrations intrusted to the minions of a court, to the puny lordlings of hereditary grandeur—a set of beings who had nothing to sustain them but the smile of a minister, or nothing to protect them from insignificance but the blazoned heraldry of their ancestors. There is no denying that in France the military appointments are decided by the questions of merit and fitness and character. In the other countries of Europe—and I blush to say that even in this vaunted abode of purity and of patriotism, almost everything connected with the interest of the public comes under the putrifying touch of money or of politics—that corruption has insinuated itself into every department of the State—that men are summoned up into offices of distinction who are only calculated to cover a nation with disgrace, and expose it to the derision of its enemies—that the public voice has lost its energy, and the united indignation of a whole people is often unable to drag to punishment those delinquents whom patronage has exalted and the smiles of a court have sheltered from infamy. This surely affords a heartless and a mortifying spectacle, and is calculated to alarm any lover of his country when he compares it with that dreadful energy which its enemies can muster up to overwhelm it. We see no imbecility there—no corruption in the military appointments of Bonaparte—no submissive accommodation to the interest of great families—the truth is, that his power renders him independent of it. In him we see vested in one person the simple energy of a despotism. He is so far exalted above the greatest of his subjects that to his eye all are equal. He needs not to temporize or accommodate or allure the friendship of a great family with the bribery of corruption—he throws open the career of preferment to the whole of his immense population—he calls upon all to enter into this generous and aspiring competition of talent, and it is

a competition that has often exalted the veriest child of raggedness and obscurity to the proudest offices of the empire. I do not speak in the tone of disaffection—I speak in the tone of patriotism. I do not mean to pursue the errors of my Government in the spirit of hostility—it is in that spirit of regret that proceeds from the sincerity of my attachment—from my conviction that the Government of England is worth the contending for—that every lover of his country should stand by it to maintain its purity, as well as to defend its existence—that he should not only risk his life in fighting the battles of his country against the enemies of its independence, but that he should risk all the advantages of patronage and preferment in fighting the battles of the Constitution against the enemies of its purity and its vigour. Let us hope that the present state of affairs will operate as an effectual lesson to the rulers of the country—that the sense of danger will animate the public mind to all the enthusiasm of virtue—that the ardour of patriotism will chase away all the obliquities of a selfish and interested politics—that our legislation will turn with shame from the low game of party dissension, and lend their unanimity to that noble struggle that is to decide the liberty of the future age, and give a lasting complexion to the history of future times. But let us not forget our dependence upon God—that mighty Being who reigns supreme over the will of man, and exerts an absolute control over all hearts and all purposes. He who hardened the heart of Pharaoh against the calamities of his country can exert the same influence over the minds of the rulers of the present day. He can infatuate the mind of the country against the feeling of its dangers—He can throw a slumbering indifference over the land—He can lay us asleep on the brink of destruction, and send that torpor, that security into the hearts of our rulers which is the melancholy symptom of a falling empire. But we hope better things; that the same God who can turn the heart of man wheresoever he will, will send a wise and a righteous spirit over the government of public affairs—that the country will awaken to its dangers—and that purity and patriotism will at length preside over the administration of its interests.

In this day set apart for the expression of public sentiments, you should rise in gratitude to the Ruler of nations, that mighty Being who has turned the battle from your gates; who has singled you out among the countries of Europe, and given you the exclusive privilege of living in peace while the world around you is involved in all the cruelty and turbulence of war. I fear that none of us have a lively enough conception of the gratitude that we ought to feel for so inestimable a blessing—that we live in the bosom of domestic tranquillity—that we have no midnight alarm to disturb us—no sound of horror to strike upon our ear, and keep us awake and trembling in the agony of apprehension—no moaning of wounded acquaintances—no shrieks of the dying to rend the heart of sensibility—no hostile footsteps to warn us of the nearness of a brutal and enraged soldiery—no loud and stormy reproaches, to send anguish into the mother's heart, and make her weep in the wildness of despair over the members of her shrinking and devoted family. What a picture of horror—the seat of war—when the marauding army of the conqueror is let loose upon the country—when they separate into parties, and each singles out its own house or its own neighbourhood as the object of its brutality and its vengeance—when every nerve is strained to deeds of barbarity—when pity is laughed at as a weakness, or its gentle whispers are drowned in the wild uproar of rapacity and desolation and murder. What a contrast to the country in which we live!—what a spectacle of peace in the midst of a wild and troubled theatre! What would not the houseless victims of Spain give for the warmth and security of our dwellings?—where every man lives under his own vine and his own fig-tree—where he steps forth in the morning and prosecutes in safety the labours of the day—where he returns in the evening, and has his peaceful fireside enlivened by the smiling aspect of his family around him—where the Sabbath morn still continues to bless the hum-

ble abode of the poor man and of the labourer—where the church-bell is still heard to waft its delightful music along our valleys, and to call an assembled people to the exercise of piety. Let the piety of this day be gratitude to that mighty Being who takes up the hills in His hands, and weighs the nations in a balance. He has thrown around our happy country the shelter of a protecting ocean—He has mustered his own elements to defend us. The green island of the north sits in the bosom of security—it hears the sound of the battle from afar, but quietness dwells there, and peace and joy are among its children.

Look at the extent of Britain, and it is a speck on the surface of the world. Look at the map, and it appears like an humble appendage to that immense continent that is in arms against it. Yet how high it stands in the proud lists of glory—how great in the independence of its empire—how awful in the thunder of its power that is heard in the remotest corners of the world—how firm in the patriotism and intrepidity of its people, who rally round the standard of their liberties, and maintain the name and dignity of their nation against the fury of a devouring ambition!

We have to thank the God of battles that Britain, though deceived perhaps in her aspiring wishes for the liberties of Europe—yet that Britain herself stands as secure and as independent as ever. In the very last event of her history there may have been disaster, but there has been no disgrace—there may have been loss, but there has been no infamy—there may have been retreat from the power of numbers, but even this retreat has been emblazoned in the splendours of victory, and the annals of our country's renown are crowded with the names of dead and of living heroes. Grant that we abandon the liberty of Europe—yet the question of Britain's liberty is entire. We are no worse than before. The enemy does not stand in a more menacing attitude—nor does invasion lower more frightfully than at first upon our beloved island. The country has witnessed the talent and the prowess of our commanders—its confidence is exalted. Our late campaigns have furnished a most useful accession to military skill and military experience. That alarm which seized our politicians at the bug-bear of our commercial embarrassments, has subsided. It is not above a year since it was anticipated, from the suspension of all intercourse with other nations, that something in the shape of a convulsion was to come upon the country. The convulsion has never made its appearance—it has spared us for one year, and it will spare us for twenty, if circumstances impose upon us the necessity of prolonging the experiment to such an extent. The public interest is as flourishing as ever. We witness the same animation and extent and prosperity in all the departments, both of the public service and of private industry. The experience of every day is vindicating to the eyes of the world the independence of our resources, and that we have a vigour within which is native and inherent and imperishable.

Do not think that I am turning your attention from religion to politics. I am enumerating the circumstances on which your prosperity is founded; but I give God the glory and the praise for being the author of these circumstances. The explanation of any event or of any appearance upon natural principles should have no effect whatever in extinguishing piety. I am correct in saying, that we enjoy light in the daytime, because then the sun is above the horizon; but it does not therefore follow that I stop short at this explanation—that I forget that mighty Being who gave the sun its existence, who fixed this astonishing mass of luminous matter in the centre of our system, and bade it give light and cheerfulness and joy to the worlds that roll around it. I am correct in saying that the future security and independence of our empire is founded on the patriotism of our people, on the attachment which the country feels to its government, and on the extent of those resources which it is the province of an enlightened economy to unfold and to establish; but it does not follow that I overlook God—that I withdraw your attention from Him who is the author of all facts and of all princi-

ples—that I withhold the homage of my gratitude and my piety from that great comprehensive power that presides in high authority over the moral as well as over the material universe—or that I offer an idolatry to second causes, which I would take away from that supreme and animating mind that formed all things and sustains all things.

A dark and tremendous uncertainty hangs over the future history of the world. Events succeed each other with a rapidity that absolutely benumbs the faculties and annihilates the sensation of wonder. As much happens in the space of a single year, as would formerly have been enough to signalize a whole century. During the wars of Frederick of Prussia, all Europe hung upon his enterprises—every eye was turned as to a splendid theatre, where the genius and intrepidity of a great man commanded the homage of an admiring world, and the report of his victories filled all people with terror and astonishment. This same Prussia is annihilated in the space of a few days—and mark the difference of the public mind: it has ceased to be spoken of. All the interest and wonder and novelty of this great occurrence evaporates in the course of a single month. The attention of the public is hurried away to other objects—new scenery is presented to engross every eye and eclipse the memory of the old. The mind is fatigued with the rapidity of the succession—it seeks for repose in indifference—and the same public that was once so feelingly alive to the fate of a ruined kingdom or the interests of a trifling principality, would now slumber in apathy though all Europe were in commotion, and its oldest empires fell in this wild war of turbulence and disorder.

Let us rise in gratitude to Heaven that we stand aloof from this theatre of convulsions. Our security depends upon ourselves. No wisdom, no energy can save us, if we flinch from the cause of patriotism and virtue. The strength of a country lies in the heart of its inhabitants. This is a day of fasting; but we should remember that to fast is to repent, and to repent is to reform. It is not the visionary reform of political enthusiasts that I speak of—it is a reform in the lives and hearts of individuals—that reform which would settle the reign of integrity in the councils of our nation, and would settle the influence of piety among our families and cottages—that reform which would descend to your children, and secure the character of yet future ages—that reform of which every great man should give the example that every poor man should be proud to imitate—that reform which would reconcile all the orders of the community, and make them feel that they had but one cause and one interest—that reform which would banish prejudice and disaffection from the land, and bind to the throne of a beloved sovereign the homage of a virtuous and affectionate people.

SERMON VIII.

*The Sentiments suitable to a Communion Sabbath.**

PRAYER.

We desire O Lord, to pay Thee the homage of our humility and of our gratitude—of our gratitude, because of the multitude of Thy mercies, and of our humility, because we are unworthy of the least of them. We are the feeble insects of an hour—Thou art

* The year 1810 was the transition period in the religious history of Dr. Chalmers. Death had thrice entered the circle of his nearest relationship. He himself had been trembling on the very border of the grave. An illness which for four months confined him to his room, and for more than half a year rendered him unfit for all public duty, had brought death and eternity very near to his thoughts. He was engaged, besides, in drawing up the article "Christianity" for the Edinburgh Encyclopædia—in preparing which, the primitive Christians—their characters—their lives—their death—had become the object of an intensely interesting contemplation. Traces of all the different influences to which he was thus exposed, as well as of the effects produced by them, reveal themselves in the two succeeding sermons, and in the prayers and addresses which accompany them—all of which belong to the same memorable year.

the Ancient of days. Thy duration has no end, and Thou art wrapt up in the still more awful mystery of having never had a beginning. The little circle in which we move is but a spot in the immensity of Thy works. Thy presence fills all space, and extends through the immeasurable fields of creation. All the powers of our thought and of our attention are taken up with the petty interests of an individual, or with the humble concerns of a family. But Thine all-seeing mind is everywhere; it presides in high authority over all worlds; it takes in at a single glance the endless varieties of life, and motion, and intelligence—nor can the minutest of Thy works escape for a single moment Thy notice and Thy direction.

Blessed be Thy name we are permitted to approach Thee. We are Thy creatures, and have the privilege of Thy mercy. Thine all-seeing eye never abandons us—Thou hast given us a part in this wide scene of magnificence and glory—Thou hast taught us to confide in Thy goodness, and given it to feeble, wretched, sinful man to rejoice in the hand that formed, and in the right hand that guides and sustains him.

But how miserable our returns of gratitude and obedience! Alas, we have corrupted our ways—we are children of guilt and disobedience. Look, O Lord, with an eye of pity upon our weakness and upon our errors. Alas! how feeble, how capricious, how ineffectual are our best attempts to love and to serve Thee! We may form a momentary purpose of goodness, but it is speedily lost in the folly and dissipation of the world. In the quietness of solitude our hearts rise to Thee, and taste the elevation of piety. In the walks of active life this loftiness of sentiment is forgotten—we mingle in the pursuits of the world, and are driven along by the vanity of its perishable interests. In the hour of sickness we shake off the anxieties of time, and take a near and an intimate view of the vast eternity which lies before us. In the hour of health the infatuation returns—we place death and eternity at a distance; we get surrounded with the variety of this world's objects—they exert an irresistible dominion over our senses—time becomes everything, and eternity nothing. The futurity which lies on the other side of time and of the grave is never thought of, or never thought of with improvement. We lose all the impression, all the earnestness of our religious convictions; this world lords it over us. Are we grieved? it is at this world's disappointments. Are we angry? it is at this world's provocations. Are we glad? it is at this world's prosperity. Are we thoughtful? it is about this world's paltry and evanescent interests. The mind loses its elevation; it lets itself down from the grandeur of eternity; it becomes a slave to the delusions of time, and suffers the vanities of an instant to engross all its cares and all its anxiety.

We lament before Thee, O Lord, our hardened indifference in matters of religion—that we should be so blind to the importance and the magnitude of its interests—that it should occupy so small a portion of our anxiety—that eternity should so seldom be present to our thoughts, while this world, and the things of this world, are suffered to exert an entire dominion over all our desires and all our faculties. Deliver us, O Lord, from an infatuation so ruinous, so unreasonable, so unworthy of beings capable of wisdom and of reflection, and all of whom have a death to endure and an immortality to prepare for. Fill our hearts with serious and permanent and habitual impressions of religion. May it be something more than the momentary impulse of an occasion—something more than that momentary feeling which is excited by the eloquence of a sermon, the enthusiasm of a prayer, or the elevation of a mind which gives an hour to retirement, and forms its romantic purposes at a distance from the cares and distractions of the world—something more than that holy rapture which kindles in the bosom when the table of the Lord is spread, and the man of God invites us to approach it—something more than those sweet and heavenly emotions which so often fill the heart of the Christian in the solitude of a Sabbath evening, when quietness is on all the hills, and everything breathes peace and piety around him. May the preparations of solitude tell upon our conduct in the walks of business and society. May the principles which are formed in retirement have vigour to withstand the difficulties of life and the formidable temptations of the world.

May our religion not be confined to the solemnity of ordinances. May its empire be established in our hearts. May it reign supreme over the thoughts and purposes and affections. May it be with us in solitude as well as in society—in the house of business as well as in the house of prayer and the meetings of the solemn assembly. Let it be the study of our lives to advance the honour of the true religion, and to extend its influence in the world; and may we ever remember that the most effectual method of recommending it to the world is to hold out to its view the peaceable fruits of righteousness. May it be the study of our lives to hold out a graceful and an alluring picture of Christianity to the world—to let the world see what the religion of Jesus is capable of effecting—what worth and what embellishment it gives to the character of every true disciple—what graces adorn the

walks both of his private and his public history—the honour which reigns over all his transactions—his noble integrity in business—the generous humanity with which he devotes his time and attention to the interests of the species—the pure and unsullied temperance of his life—the virtuous authority with which he discharges the duties of a father, a master, and a husband—the quietness of his happy home, where affection reigns in every heart, and peace sheds a holy calm over the feelings and tempers of a united family.

"Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths." LEVITICUS xxvi. 34.

THE rest which was promised to the land of Israel is very different from the rest which we enjoy. The land was to rest in the absence of its people. It was to rest for the wickedness of its people, while they were suffering under all the horrors of captivity and imprisonment. It was not the calm and peaceful tranquillity under which we live; it was the silence of desolation; it was the calm which follows after the horrors of a tempest; it was the stillness of a depopulated country—the gloomy picture of ruined towns and deserted villages, where the battle had just ceased to rage, and the sword had accomplished the work of slaughter and extermination. How different from the smiling aspect of the country around us! I wish to call your attention to it, that you may rise in gratitude to the God of all your mercies, because he has kept the battle from your gates—because you enjoy your sacraments in peace, and the quietness of the Sabbath morn still continues to bless the humble abodes of the poor man and of the labourer. You live, as your fathers did before you, in the bosom of security—you have quietness in your dwellings—the sound of the church-bell is still heard to waft its peaceful music through the valley in which we live—the people repair to the house of God, where they may join in the praises of their Redeemer without danger and without interruption. How fresh the morning of this hallowed day! The sun has mounted high in the firmament of heaven. Peacefulness rests on the bosom of every field—the sound of the battle is afar. Everything speaks the goodness of the most High—and that the sheltering arm of the Omnipotent is around us. He is in this house; His eye is continually upon us: "Where two or three are met together, there I will be with you." He will receive the penitence and the praises of an assembled people: He marks the purposes of every heart: His eye is upon the young when they lift their holy prayer, and breathe the purposes of piety.

The solemnity of a communion sabbath has always impressed me as the most decent and affecting of all spectacles—when we see the Christians of all ranks and of all ages sitting down at the table and joining in the common prayer of penitence and of piety—celebrating the praises of that Redeemer who died for them—and obeying the sacred call which He left in charge to His disciples: "Do this in remembrance of me—do this till I come again." You are doing what your fathers have done before you, and what your children will continue to do after you. The name of the Lord will be held in everlasting remembrance. The ordinance of the Supper will be kept up till the end of the world—till He comes again, and the sound of the last trumpet announces the termination of all things.

The best evidence of our gratitude for the peace which we enjoy in celebrating the sacrament, is to celebrate the sacrament aright; and for this purpose let me study to impress upon you a few of those sentiments which this important and affecting ordinance is calculated to awaken.

The first sentiment which I shall endeavour to impress upon you is a sentiment of thankfulness. The second is a sentiment of pious obedience to the law of Heaven. The third is a sentiment of the vanity of time; and of the importance of religion, which reaches beyond time, and discloses to us the splendours of an everlasting world.

The first sentiment which I shall attempt to impress upon you is a sentiment of thankfulness. You are the creatures of grace and of forgiveness; you are the helpless victims of your own

feebleness. You had thrown yourselves out from the approbation of God and the hopes of immortality. Nothing awaited you but a fearful looking for of judgment, and utter exclusion from the Redeemer's kingdom. Every day you offend the God of your mercies, and every hour of your life you come short of His glory. The degeneracy of man is a doctrine too humble for the admirers of a self-sufficient and ostentatious philosophy. It is not fashionable. It wants elegance to recommend it and some fine genius to throw around it the graces and the embellishments of oratory. There are some who turn from the humility of the gospel with repugnance and disgust—who delight to expatiate in the higher fields of eloquence and sentiment, and ravish the ears of a cultivated audience with the beauties of virtue and the dignity of that mind which can maintain the rectitude of its own purposes. But we have only to open our eyes and be convinced that this is the mockery of a warm imagination—that however beautiful the picture, it wants truth to support it; that it is not confirmed by the evidence of observation; and however much we may love to dwell on the fancied scenes of perfection, they want both the gravity of wisdom and the sobriety of experience. No, my brother, there is no getting over it. Man is corrupt, and the testimony of everything around us loudly proclaims it. We have only to consult our own hearts and to take a lesson from the testimony of our own senses. In everything we see a want of firmness—a want of perseverance—a number of melancholy backslidings from the path of obedience—an insensibility to the awful considerations of heaven and immortality—an estrangement from God—an entire slavery of the mind to the trifles of sense and of time—and a thousand examples of wickedness which proclaim our principles to be unhinged, and the moral constitution of man to be enfeebled. With such a multitude of testimonies before you can you deny the necessity of a Saviour—can you deny the homage of your gratitude to that mighty Being who came to relieve you from this body of death, and to unbar the gates of immortality to a despairing world? You had corrupted your ways; you had relapsed into disobedience. The offence of our first parents had entailed feebleness upon all their posterity—the whole heart was sick and the whole head was sore—and man stood the trembling victim of his own disobedience, ready to be crushed by the finger of Omnipotence, and to appease the fury of an offended Lawgiver. But a Star appeared in the east. The day-spring from on high visited us. A voice was heard proclaiming glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to the children of men. Our Saviour came down from heaven. He left the bosom of His father—He resigned the glories of His nature—He arrayed himself in the garb of humanity—He took upon Him the infirmities of a man—He made himself of no reputation, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. And He died that we might live—He died for the salvation of a world from which He received nothing but persecution and ingratitude—He died to accomplish the benevolent purposes of heaven—He died to establish the reign of mercy and to restore the children of Adam to the smiles of a reconciled Father. You weep over the recollection of His sufferings. You rise in gratitude to the God who created, and to the Saviour who died for you. Your hearts warm within you when you touch the affecting memorials of His death—and may you prize His last words as the best of legacies: "Do this in remembrance of me; do this till I come again."

The next sentiment which I shall attempt to impress upon you is a sentiment of pious obedience to the law of heaven. It is quite in vain to say that the faith of the New Testament excludes obedience. Faith gives new vigour to your obedience. It is the principle of obedience, and obedience is the best evidence of, and the best testimony to, the purity of your faith. What faith could be livelier than that of the primitive Christians; and where, I would ask, in the whole history of the Church, shall we find obedience more perfect, more zealous, more persevering, and more steadily maintained in opposition

to all the dangers of persecution, and to all the terrors of the world? Did the apostles of Christianity conceive that the faith of their Master exempted them from the law of obedience? They had faith; but did this faith extinguish their activity—did it render them indifferent to duty and to practice—did it set them loose from the restraints of morality—or did it exempt them from the labours of a life spent in the exercise of Christian virtues, and devoted to the maintenance of its cause? Take the Apostle Paul for an example. Whose faith more ardent, and whose life at the same time more laborious? He did not spend his time in the indolence of speculation. He had faith; but faith was not enough for him. His life was spent in the duties of an active profession; he went about preaching to all nations, and in so doing he gave an example of practical obedience; he gave the example of a good work, and in so doing he rendered it evident to all succeeding Christians that good works form a necessary part of religion. In the performance of this good work he braved every danger; he set his face to every difficulty; he spent a life of the most unwearied exertion, and taught us by his own example that to be a Christian is something more than to believe—that it is to do, and to practice, and to obey. You are also called upon to the performance of good works; and remember that you have not the same difficulties to oppose your progress, or to damp your ardour in the service of Christ. It is a good work that you are at present engaged in. You are sitting at the table of the Lord, and in so doing you are going through an active obedience; you are performing a duty; you are giving an example of allegiance to the law of the gospel; you are obeying one of the commandments —Do this in remembrance of me; do this till I come again. Let me never hear then of any contempt for practical righteousness. If works are to be excluded from the system of Christianity, why undertake the work in which you are at present engaged—why join in the sacrament? for what is the sacrament but an example of practical obedience, and an observance of one of those laws which our Saviour left in charge to His disciples? But remember that it is not the only law which you are called upon to observe. There are other laws, there are other duties, there are other acts of obedience which deserve your attention, and the neglect of which would render the sacrament useless, and the profession that you now make an idle mockery in the face of heaven. For what purpose do you sit at the table of the Lord?—Is it not to testify your gratitude for the benefits of His redeeming mercy? Now, is it possible that you can be sincerely thankful to a Being whose authority you trample on, whose will you disregard, whose commandments you violate? No, my brethren, there is no getting over it. Without holiness no man shall see God. The necessity of practical righteousness may be seen in every page of the New Testament. The same authority that calls upon you to join in the sacrament, also calls upon you to attend to the duties of ordinary life.—Do to others as you would wish them to do to you. —Speak not evil one of another.—In brotherly love and in honour prefer one another.—Behave peaceably to all men. —Visit the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions, and keep yourselves unspotted from the world. Why do you annex so high a reverence to the sacrament, while those plain and every-day duties come in for no share of your reverence at all? Why do you look upon the sacrament as such a solemn, such an important, such an affecting ordinance, while you let slip the duties of charity, and justice, and plain dealing—duties which are certainly as much insisted upon in the New Testament, and to which our Saviour annexes as high an importance as to any ordinance of His appointment? I do allow that there is something impressive and affecting in the very nature of a sacrament. It occurs seldom, and this has the effect of giving it great additional solemnity; and, at all events, there is something in the highest degree serious and interesting in seeing a multitude of Christians assembled for the common purpose of expressing penitence for their sins, and gratitude to the Saviour who died for them. But I must think, in addition to all this, that there is another reason

which makes Christians more punctual in the observance of the sacrament than the other duties of the Christian life. The sacrament is a duty that can be more easily performed. I do not say that it is easier to perform this duty aright; for in performing it aright you must yield the submission of your hearts to the whole law and obedience of the gospel. But I say that it is easier to perform this duty aright to the eyes of the world, than to maintain the other virtues of the Christian character. It is easier to sit down at the table of the Lord—to maintain an appearance of great reverence and great decency—to handle the symbols of a Redeemer's death—to go through all the established formalities of this ordinance: it is easier even to weep at the affecting remembrance of what He did and what He suffered, and to be powerfully impressed with the solemnity of the occasion—I say it is easier to do and to feel all this than it is to maintain an upright walk and conversation in the world—to maintain integrity in your dealings—to be charitable and humane to your poorer brethren—to be sober and temperate in your conduct—to abstain from theft, and calumny, and injustice—to resist the allurements of selfishness and gain—to measure every step of your ordinary conduct by the commandments of our Saviour—to bring every thought into captivity of the obedience of His law. Now, why would you do the one while you leave the other undone? Why would you observe the sacrament, and neglect the other duties of the Christian character? Why would you mind the appointed fast, while you neglect the weightier matters of the law—justice, and mercy, and faith? The reason, I am afraid, is too plain. You would gladly get off with the easier, while you shrink from the more difficult parts of obedience. You would like to serve your Maker with as little trouble and fatigue as possible; you would like to get to heaven as smoothly as you can, and discharge the burden of religious obligation at the least possible expense. Now is this your gratitude to your Saviour? Is this the high reverence that you feel for Him who suffered and bled for you? Is this the whole amount of those fine professions that you make at His table to love and to honour him? Yes! you will honour Him while it is easy; you will obey Him when He calls for a light sacrifice. But if it is a heavy commandment—if it is some painful sacrifice that he requires of you—then you would gladly get off. How different from the example of the primitive Christians! They obeyed our Saviour in what was difficult; they resigned every interest for His service; they bade adieu to the world and to all its joys; they were ready to surrender life in the maintenance of the Christian profession. Let us imitate their example. We have not the same hardships to encounter; we have not the same difficulties to oppose our progress. Let us enter with cheerfulness into all the struggles of the Christian warfare; and as we have discharged the easier part of the law by sitting down at the table of the Lord, let us discharge the more difficult parts of the law by being honest in all our transactions with the world, diligent in the performance of every social duty, humble and condescending to our brethren of mankind, generous to the poor, and maintaining in every situation assigned us by Providence a life and conversation becoming the gospel.

Again, another sentiment which I shall attempt to impress upon your feelings is the vanity of time. It is a sentiment which the recurrence of a yearly ordinance is well calculated to awaken. We live in the land of mortality, and neither rank nor age can escape its ravages. Every year the communion table presents us with a new spectacle. Some new communicants come forward to offer their first vows, and some old ones have disappeared forever. Christians who were seen last year to live and to move and to handle the symbols of redeeming mercy, are now mouldering in the churchyard. Their friends have wept over them, and the grave-digger has performed for them the last offices. The change is gradual, and fails to impress us; but in a few years the change will be complete. Another people will sit at that table, and another minister will speak to them. We shall be all lying in quietness together, and a new gene-

ration of men will tread upon our graves. It appears to us a distant futurity, but the lapse of a few seasons will bring it round. The sun holds his unvaried course in the firmament of heaven; he marks the footsteps of time, and the span of a few revolutions will bring us to our destiny. Man hastens to his end, and in a little time the grave will receive him into its peaceful bosom. In this day of solemnity you should think of the mutability of all things. You should think of that country to which you are fast hastening. You should listen to the voice of wisdom, which proclaims the vanity of the world, and tells every man among us that it is not here where the firm footing of his interest lies.

Come then, commemorate the melancholy changes which are carrying on around us in this scene of weakness and mortality. Where are the men of the generation that is past? They, like ourselves, were eager in the pursuit of this world's phantoms, active in business, intent on the speculations of policy and state, led astray by the glitter of ambition, and devoted to the joys of sense or of sentiment. Where are the men who a few years ago gave motion and activity to this busy theatre? where those husbandmen who lived on the ground that you now occupy? where those labouring poor who dwelt in your houses and villages? where those ministers who preached the lessons of piety and talked of the vanity of this world? where those people who, on the Sabbaths of other times, assembled at the sound of the church-bell, and filled the house in which you are now sitting? Their habitation is the cold grave—the land of forgetfulness and silence. Their name is forgotten in the earth, their very children have lost the remembrance of them. The labours of their hands are covered with moss, or destroyed by the injuries of time. And we are the children of these fathers, and heirs to the same awful and stupendous destiny. Ours is one of the many generations who pass in rapid succession through this region of life and of sensibility. The time in which I live is but a small moment of this world's history. When we rise in contemplation to the roll of ages that are past, the momentary being of an individual shrinks into nothing It is the flight of a shadow; it is a dream of vanity; it is the rapid glance of a meteor; it is a flower which every breath of heaven can wither into decay; it is a tale which as a remembrance vanishes; it is a day which the silence of a long night will darken and overshadow. In a few years our heads will be laid in the cold grave, and the green turf will cover us. The children who come after us will tread upon our graves; they will weep for us a few days; they will talk of us a few months; they will remember us a few years; when our memory shall disappear from the face of the earth, and not a tongue shall be found to recall it. Now, one use to which we should apply the recurrence of a solemn and yearly ordinance is to recall the flight of time, and the rapid disappearance of its vain and perishable glories. There is a blind and melancholy infatuation upon this subject. How perishable is human life; yet no man lays it to heart. Death multiplies around us, and we look on with a wretched indifference. Acquaintances fall every year, and we resist the impressive warnings of mortality. Even under the pressure of age and of infirmity, we turn our eyes from our latter end, and count upon many days of enjoyment. When the people carry a neighbour to his grave, their talk is of this world and of this world's business. And when they see the earth close over him, and take leave of an acquaintance forever, they recur every man to his own work, and in a few hours it is forgotten.

It strikes me as the most impressive of all sentiments—that it will be all the same a hundred years after this. It is often uttered in the form of a proverb, and with the levity of a mind that is not aware of its importance. A hundred years after this! Good heavens! with what speed and with what certainty will those hundred years come to their termination. This day will draw to a close, and a number of days make one revolution of the seasons. Year follows year, and a number of years makes up a century. These little intervals of time accumulate and fill up that mighty space which appears to the

fancy so big and so immeasurable. The hundred years will come, and they will see out the wreck of whole generations. Every living thing that now moves on the face of the earth will disappear from it. The infant that hangs on its mother's bosom will only live in the remembrance of his grandchildren. The scene of life and intelligence that is now before me will be changed into the dark and loathsome forms of corruption. The people who now hear me, they will cease to be spoken of; their memory will perish from the face of the country; their flesh will be devoured with worms; the dark and creeping things that live in the holes of the earth will feed upon their bodies; their coffins will have mouldered away, and their bones be thrown up in the new-made grave. And is this the consummation of all things? Is this the final end and issue of man? Is this the upshot of his busy history? Is there nothing beyond time and the grave to alleviate the gloomy picture, to chase away these dismal images? Must we sleep forever in the dust, and bid an eternal adieu to the light of heaven?

ADDRESS.

Among the last words which our Saviour addressed to his disciples, He said —"If you love me, keep my commandments." You are now keeping one of His commandments and you do well. You are sitting at His table: you are approaching Him in that sacrament which He Himself has instituted; you are making a solemn profession of your faith, and your gratitude and your obedience; you are testifying your allegiance to Him who suffered and who died for you; you are keeping up His remembrance in the world, and fulfilling the dying request of the best and the kindest of masters—"Do this in remembrance of me; do this till I come again."

This commandment is not grievous. It is delightful to withdraw from the harassing perplexities of this world, and to rise to a foretaste and anticipation of that eternal feast which is prepared for us in a better. It is delightful in this world of mortality, where friends and acquaintances are fast dropping away from us, to make an intimate approach to the truest of all friends, who never dies, and will never abandon us. On this day, when all nature smiles around us, and an unclouded sunshine reposes on every hill and on every valley, it is delightful to look forward to the still brighter days which the light of prophecy and of revelation has laid before us. This day will soon draw to its termination, and the clouds of evening encompass our dwelling; this delicious season of the year will soon pass away, and the lowering face of winter look black and dreadful upon us; this fair and unclouded weather which gives so much gaiety to the light and cheerful imagination, will soon be dissipated, and the rushing of the storm be heard upon our windows. Nature, and all the joys which nature inspires, are deceitful and transitory. The buoyancy which a fine day gives to the animal spirits is but a momentary elevation of the heart. It may soon expire in the deepest melancholy—it lies at the mercy of every fluctuation. By resting upon it you make yourself the creature of time and its never-ending vicissitudes. The way to gain stability to your happiness is to rise from nature to nature's God—from the vanities of time to the unfading splendours of eternity—from the joys of this world to the joys of heaven—from the little play of human passions and interests to the grand business of moral and religious discipline—to the sublime pleasures of faith and of devotion—to that peace which the world knoweth not, and that elevation of heart which passeth all understanding.

You see how the very words of the institution guide our wandering spirits to that rest and that immortality which we all aspire after—"Do this till I come again." What a delightful anticipation do these words inspire us with. How calculated to reanimate the heart of the believer, and to sustain the weary and dejected spirit when oppressed by the anxieties of the world. He will come again in glory,—armed with terror, it is true, against the children of disobedience—but in all the mildness of His tender and indulgent character

to the worthy partakers of His sacrament. And when He comes again He will take you to Himself He will establish you in the everlasting mansions of peace and of righteousness, He will clothe you in the bloom and the vigour of immortality, He will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and bid every anxiety of your bosom be hushed into gentleness.

This is the noble and elevating prospect which Christianity has set before us, and it is a prospect which you may all look forward to. I do not address myself to the worldly—to those who are immersed in the cares of time and think seldom of eternity—to those who are strangers to God, and who, in observing His ordinances, pay Him the mere homage of their external profession, and are carried along by the stream of general example. The people to whom I address myself are those who really wish for immortality—who labour under the most earnest and deep-felt anxieties for their salvation—who are diffident of themselves, and conceive, in the despondency of their spirits, that the comforts of the gospel were not intended for them. What I say is intended to cure the desponding Christian of his hopelessness, and to assure him by the high authority which he reveres, that he is not far from the kingdom of God. He is now under that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation. He has commenced that career of sentiment which will lead him to heaven; and though grief and uncertainty encompass his outset, he must at last emerge into the delightful repose and confidence of the Christian faith. It is very true that the promises of Christianity are not addressed to all; but they are addressed to all who labour and are heavy laden. It is very true that there are many exceptions to the grace of God—but these exceptions are only to be found among the careless, the unreflecting, the hardened, those who live in security, and hurry along the stream of infatuation till death comes like a whirlwind upon their blind and unawakened consciences. It is very true that all are not saved—but all who labour and are heavy laden are saved if they come to Christ, for he has promised that He will give them rest.

On this day, then, devoted to the celebration of a Saviour's love, let the desponding Christian find comfort to his soul. Why abandon himself to despair against the express assurances of Scripture? Will he deny the truth of Jesus? will he deny his Omnipotence as a Saviour? will he deny the mildness of His character, or give way to the oppression of doubt and of anxiety, when to all who are in his state He addresses, without exception, the language of invitation and encouragement—Come to me, *all ye* who labour and are heavy laden? Why then does he conceive himself to be an exception? Our Saviour makes no exception, and what right has he to apprehend one? It is true you are weak, you are guilty, you are disobedient—the errors of frail and corrupted humanity hang about you perpetually; in every step you offend, and in every thought of your heart you fall short of the purity and elevation of a perfect character. This is your disease, and it is the disease of the whole human race. Every son of Adam is tainted with it; not a brother of the species who has escaped the malignity of sin—all have gone astray, and not a man among us can present to the Father of Spirits the incense of a pure and unspotted offering. You feel as you ought, when you feel the burden of your infirmities, and tremble at the inveteracy of that disease which has made such cruel inroads upon the happiness and virtue of the species. But while your eyes are open to the extent and virulence of the disease, why should they be shut against the power and efficaciousness of the remedy? Why refuse the call of the physician, or turn a deaf ear to those gracious and consolatory words in which the atonement of the Gospel is revealed to us?—Peace on earth, and good will to the children of men. O the glory and riches of the love of Christ; it passeth all understanding. Why should you refuse the comfort that is held out by Him, who says in the words of the evangelical prophet Isaiah—"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good

tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."

You approach this mighty Being in the ordinance of His appointment, and you do well. Approach Him in faith. Shake off the melancholy which oppresses you. Approach Him in prayer, and you will be heard. He will lend an attentive ear to the prayer of a broken heart; He will set your feet in a sure place; He will establish you in comfort. The sheltering arm of His love and His omnipotence will defend you. You will walk in gladness through the world, and enter with triumph into the glories of His kingdom.

SERMON IX.

Zion remembered by the Rivers of Babylon.

PRAYER.

On this the morning of Thy day we would approach Thee in the peculiar capacity of Christians. We offer ourselves to the Lord of the universe as the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. We acknowledge Him to be the authentic messenger of Thy will and of Thy promises. We profess Him to be the only true and living way to the glories of Thy paradise; that we can be redeemed only by His blood; that we can be instructed only by His righteousness; that we can be animated and sustained only by His consolations. We profess ourselves to be the followers in the faith of those illustrious men who preached and who propagated the doctrine of Jesus, who held fast their profession amid the terrors of martyrdom, and maintained the sacred intrepidity of conscience amid the cruelties of a persecuting world. How refreshing, O Lord, to the minds of those Christians must have been the ordinances of Thy religion! How sweet to their souls the Sabbath morn, which recalled the triumphs of their Saviour's resurrection! and what a day of holy gratitude and piety when they approached the table of the Lord, and their hearts burned within them at a name and a remembrance that were ever dear to them. They now sleep from the troubles of the world. They have entered into their quiet rest. They sit at the right hand of Thy throne, and shine in all the splendours of righteousness amid the glorified spirits which surround Thee. We humbly desire to imitate their example, and to tread in that path which led the Christians of old to glory and immortality. In this distant age of the Church we desire to do as our fathers have done before us—we desire to keep alive in the world the memory of a crucified Saviour—we desire to transmit to our children the purity of His ordinances—we desire that the dying request which He left behind Him may receive its accomplishment in all ages—Do this in remembrance of me; do this till I come again.

May it be the delight of our minds, O Lord, to share in this affecting solemnity; to approach that feast of love and of gratitude which lies before us; to retire for a moment from this world of care to the feelings and the exercises of piety; and to rise to the anticipation of those joys which Thou hast prepared for us in Thy eternal kingdom. We live in happier times. The dark ages of violence and of persecution are now over. We can celebrate our sacraments in peace. The noble intrepidity of the Christians of other times has secured for their descendants the quiet establishment of their religion. We thank Thee that we can now repair to the solemn assembly—that there is none to make us afraid—that liberty of conscience is established—that the delightful music of the church-bell is heard in every valley—while a benignant toleration extends its influence over a peaceful and a happy land.

We thank Thee, O God of mercy, that Thou hast not visited us with the trials of more troubled times. But may we never forget that there is still much to prove and to exercise the purity of our principles. May we never forget that Christianity is a war-

fare; that in every generation of the Church believers have their difficulties to contend with; that the life of a Christian is a life of perpetual vigilance; that while we stay in the world we have to struggle with its vices, with its allurements, with the passions and infirmities of our nature, and with that contempt which fashion and frivolity and false philosophy have often annexed to all that is serious. May we remember, Lord, that the Christians of old had something more than the mere Sabbath or sacrament to exercise to exercise their obedience—that their offering to heaven was the incense of a perpetual sacrifice; that every hour of the day the terrors of persecution hung over them; and that they were called upon to maintain the constancy of their professions amid the dangers and difficulties which never ceased to surround them. May we in like manner remember that the duty of a Christian demands something more than the mere sacrifice of a few hours at the place of devotion, or of a few sighs and prayers at the table of the sacrament. May we remember that, like the Christians of old, we have to maintain a perpetual warfare; that we are never to throw aside the armour of faith and of fortitude and of principle; that we are to carry Thy religion about with us as the guide and the ornament of our lives, as our staff to support us amid the distresses of the world, and as our shield against its difficulties and temptations. We pray for Thy blessing on this awful and important solemnity. May it be the instrument of conviction to the guilty; may it be the instrument of repentance to the alarmed; may it be the instrument of faith to the penitent; may it be the instrument to the believer of reformation and perseverance in righteousness. On this day, devoted to the celebration of a Saviour's love, may we think of our unworthiness; how helpless and unable of ourselves; how daring and multiplied our offences; how forgetful of our duty; how insensible to the awful considerations of death and judgment and eternity.

On this day may the hearts of the penitent be filled with the consolations of Thy promises. May they acknowledge the faith of the gospel as their only remedy and their only rejoicing. May they see in their remembrance of a dying Saviour that there is a hope for the guilty who reform, and for the most abandoned of characters, if he turn from the evil of his ways. May they shake off the melancholy which oppresses them, and rise to the sublime confidence of the gospel; and may they no longer resist the animating hope of forgiveness when they think of the Son of God divesting Himself of the glories of His nature, descending from heaven, assuming the infirmities of a man, submitting to a life of cruelty and mortification and to a death the most painful and ignominious; and all to impress upon the hearts of the penitent the joyful lesson of pardon and immortality.

On this day may believers gain additional strength to their principles, and renewed vigour to their purposes of obedience. May this act of devotion send them back to the world more prepared for the exercise of its duties. May it be something more than a mere momentary exercise, the effect of which expires with the performance. May it be seen many days hence, and may it yield in abundance the fruits of purity and of righteousness.

As we sit together at the same table, may we live together as children of the same God, as brethren of the same nature, as disciples of the same Saviour. May the hearts of all be improved, and consoled, and exalted. May we think of that eternal feast which Thou hast prepared for us. May every thought be withdrawn from the vanities of a perishable world. May we have our eye heavenward, where brighter days await us—where we shall be purified from the imperfections of time, and be able to present to the Father of Spirits the incense of a holier and more unspotted offering.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."—PSALMS CXXXVII. 1—6.

HAD the Bible come down to us unaccompanied by any pretensions to being inspired, it would have stood high as a literary composition; but the very circumstance of its being the code of our religious faith is against the reputation of its eloquence. The Christian has a higher object in contemplation: and the infidel has too great a disposition to undervalue the whole subject to carry away a fair impression even of its subordinate merits. We are familiarized to the Bible from our infancy. It is the book of our schools, and the reading of it formed the task and the discipline of our boyhood. In some cases this may lead us to associate with the Bible a

sentiment of reverence, and in other cases a sentiment of disgust. At all events, it must have the effect of modifying in some degree our impression of it. The feelings and recollections of our early years never abandon us. There is an obstinacy about them which never fails to exert a most decided influence upon the taste; and in this way our judgment of the Bible, viewed merely as a specimen of ancient literature, is different from what it would have been had we been released from those peculiar associations which must exist in every Christian country, or had our attention to its merits been the free and spontaneous exercise of our maturer faculties.

Still, however, it is not in the power of any association entirely to obliterate the strong and genuine characters of excellence; nor can I conceive it possible that any mind should be so beset with prejudice as to refuse the testimony of its feelings to the beauty and tenderness of the passage which I have now laid before you. It possesses many of the constituents of the finest poetry—the scenery by the river side—the action of hanging their harps upon the willows in the midst thereof—the sentiment, such as was nearest to every bosom, suggested by the memory of a distant home, and the place where their fathers worshipped—the affecting expression of that sentiment, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning"—"If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." I must say, that in such images and expressions as these, there is a nature, a pathos, and a simplicity which must carry it over all opinion and all prejudice.

There may be an excess in spiritualizing. Christians there are who delight in the exercise of mystic interpretation—who find a hidden meaning in every passage of the Bible—who construe the most distant resemblance into a type and a prophecy, and whose whole exposition of Scripture is made up of fanciful ingenuities. This extravagance has been carried too far. It is to be lamented by the friends of Christianity. It supplies a topic of ridicule to the enemies of our faith, and it rests the defence or illustration of Christian doctrine on ground which, to say the least of it, is suspicious or vulnerable. The Bible stands in no need of any such commentator. Take it according to its natural and obvious interpretation. Enough for it the direct simplicity of its language and the strength of its unquestionable evidences. You would lose nothing though you were to surrender all the expositions of our mystical and figurative interpreters. In these expositions you often meet with much ingenuity, and what is still better, with much affecting and evangelical piety. But you may give them all up, and yet retain everything that is worth contending for. The great body of undeniable doctrine remains unimpaired. You have all that inspiration has thought fit to reveal to us in clear and authoritative language. We now live under the full revelation of the gospel; and why run in the pursuit of shadows, when the truth stands before us in the plainest and most substantial characters?

The psalm before us has been made to undergo two interpretations. Take it in its obvious sense and direct meaning, and it is the song of Jews labouring under the horrors of the Babylonish captivity, aspiring after their distant home, and swearing to be true and faithful to the remembrance of it. Take it in the remote and secondary meaning which has been ascribed to it, and it may be considered as the song of Christians labouring under the miseries of their earthly pilgrimage, aspiring after that heaven from which sin and corruption had banished them, and swearing never to lose sight of it as their home and their expectation. Now I do not mean to dispute this last interpretation, but I think it would be as well that it were not too much insisted upon. It gives no aid to the doctrine of immortality: that is sufficiently established without the assistance of any refined or mystical interpretation. But it may do mischief. It may give an appearance of weakness to Christianity. It may lead the unthinking to suppose that the whole body of Christian doctrine is composed of such flimsy materials as the remote and fanciful speculations of mystical commentators. It may give a triumph to infidelity, furnishing it with a fair subject for ridi

cule, and it may take away from the friends of the gospel all that security and proud confidence of argument to which the honesty of a good cause entitles its defenders.

Let us therefore abandon the idea of any spiritual interpretation, or rather let us offer no opinion upon the subject. The psalm still remains to us as a specimen of most beautiful composition—and what is still better, it may be made as subservient as before to all the feelings and purposes of piety. If any writer shall fasten upon a distant home as the subject of his poetry, it is not necessary to suppose that it is my home or my family that is intended—it is enough for me that the sentiments of that poem are the sentiments of nature and propriety. I make them my own, I transfer them to the resembling situation which I myself occupy; I catch the spirit of the composition, and feel my heart bettered by all the truth and tenderness which abound in it. Now what is true of a human composition is true of the sacred poetry before us. My home may not have been in the writer's contemplation, but no matter, I feel the inspiration of his sentiment, and I apply it to my own circumstances—I enter into his pathos, because I feel myself, though not in the same, yet in a kindred situation. This wilderness of care I call my banishment—my distant home is heaven; and in the contempt and discouragements which religion meets with from the world, I see the triumph and the ridicule of enemies. I do not seek, nor is it of importance, to know if all this were in the mind of the psalmist—enough for me if he touches with sensibility and effect upon his own congenial situation—I feel myself carried along in a train of simultaneous emotions, and resign my heart to the full impression of his imagery and of his sentiments.

With these observations in our mind, let us enter into the exposition of the passage now before us, and endeavour to apply the feelings and principles of the psalm to the actual condition of Christians.

Ver. 1, 2.—"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." I am sensible that there are many who do not enter into the feeling that this world is a banishment. The world forms all their home and all their enjoyment. It is the sole theatre of their ambition; and in the happiness which they hope to find exclusively there, they never once think of giving a look or a wish beyond it. I am sensible that with almost every human being it is this world and this world's objects which engross the great majority of their time—that its interest forms the grand spring of human activity—that it is for this that we see all things active and in motion through the various departments of business—and that the great purpose of man in all the restlessness and variety of his movements is to secure some warm and well sheltered tenement on this side of death. This entire devotion of the heart to the anxieties of time is the most obstinate, though the most unreasonable principle of our nature. In vain shall we bring every power of eloquence to bear against it—even the voice of heavenly inspiration has been lifted in vain; and even in spite of the gospel, and the splendour and evidence of its revelations, how few are to be found on the face of the world who live for eternity. But I shall refute, though I cannot conquer it, and have only one argument to offer—the simple argument of the grave. What, I would ask, does it all tend to? It all ends in forgetfulness. As sure as yonder sun maintains his unvaried course in the firmament of heaven, these busy and restless pursuits will terminate in nothing. I may fail to impress you, but it is not your impression which constitutes the truth. Time is the mighty and resistless element upon which I make my calculation—and in all the confidence of this mighty argument, do I prophesy your fall. I have only to look forward to the lapse of a few short years, and I see every Christian who now hears me in his sepulchre. This little time will not put an end to the ambition of the world, but it will put an end to yours. The generation to come will be the imitators of your folly, and human life will still offer to our notice the same spectacle of activity that is soon to be extinguished, and of joys

that are on the eve of perishing. But to you the world with all its pleasures and all its greatness will be as if it had never been. It will pass like a fleeting image upon your memory. Eternity will rise before you in all its grandeur and in all its importance; and you will come to acknowledge that it is there, and there alone, where your home and your inheritance lie.

And what are we here but exiles from this home? What is the state of human life but a state of banishment from Heaven, and from the purity of its enjoyments—banishment from that peace of conscience which settles there—banishment from the presence of God and the full contemplation of his attributes—banishment from that perfection of virtue which reigns in paradise, and from the exercise of all those delightful charities on which the dark and angry passions of this world have made so cruel an inroad? This is not our resting-place. Even the men of this world are perpetually tending to repose, but never finding it—at one time racked by the pangs of disappointment, at another carried along the rapid career of a successful ambition—but finding, even in the full possession of the object they strive after, that the joys of this world are tasteless and unsatisfying. The heavenly-minded feel that this is not their resting-place. While they are in the body they labour under the weight of its infirmities. Temptation assails them—fancy plies them with the vanity of its allurements, and their minds wander from the purity and elevation of the gospel. Vexation frets their tempers, and in the violence of irritated feelings, they forget the peace and charity of Christians. In the unguarded hour of company they indulge their vanity or censoriousness, or love of distinction. It is true that a good Christian will struggle to maintain his integrity amid the innumerable difficulties which surround him. With the joys of the Christian faith he will combine the diligence of the Christian practice. The motto of his life will be—"Though faint, yet pursuing." He will try to make head against the sin which most easily besets him, nor will he ever to the end of his days shrink in indolence or despair from the toils of religious discipline. But still the frailties of his degraded nature hang perpetually about him, and remind him of his fall. He aspires after perfect obedience, and grieves at the distance which separates him from the object of his pious ambition. He feels himself an exile from heaven, and from the purity of its laws. He presses forward to the prize of his high calling, but grieves to find that the passions and interests of the world should so often break in upon the elevation of his purposes. Like the Christians of old, he is perplexed, though not in despair, and he longs to be delivered from this perplexity. He longs for that time when he shall repose from the agitation of guilty fears and guilty passions; when the powers of corruption shall be destroyed in his soul; when his spirit, like the spirits of other just men, shall be made perfect; when conscience shall have nothing to reproach him with, and every faculty within him shall move in harmony to the great laws of truth, and order, and righteousness.

The Christian who longs for the reign of charity, and tastes it to be gracious, will feel that this is not his resting-place. In this world what cruel obstructions to that perfect love which forms the joy of paradise; what variance, what emulation, what rivalship among families exist in the bosom of every neighbourhood; what deep and revolting insinuations to another's prejudice or another's ridicule; what unchristian pleasure in the low and mischievous work of calumny; what secret repinings at the growing fame and prosperity of an acquaintance; and what triumph in his disgrace or in his fall! But let me not overcharge the picture. We do not say that this is of universal application, but there are many examples of it, and enough to convince us that we are yet very far from those millennial days when charity shall reign in the world, and form the whole human race into one family of brothers. There is no happiness more truly angelic than that which consists in the feeling and exercise of perfect cordiality betwixt man and his fellow. We are exiles, then, from the happiness of our condition, while we live in a world where this cordiality is far from being perfect—where it is ex

posed to many interruptions—where the dark and angry passions are perpetually breaking in upon it—and where, setting aside the malignity of the human character, our very ignorance of one another, and want of understanding, are enough to impede the free flow and harmony of friendship. There are some to whose hearts a cold unfriendly look forms the cruelest of all disappointments; who are formed for charity, and feel the exercise of it to be the most pleasurable of all enjoyments. To such as these, this world is a banishment. It is a banishment from that perfect love which reigns in Paradise, and is the delight and exercise of all who live in it; where every eye meets another in the full glance of cordiality and affection; where in every being we meet with we recognize a brother and a friend; and where from the throne of God to the very humblest of His children, all shall rejoice in that charity which never faileth, and which will form the inhabitants of heaven into one great and united family.

The Christian who droops and is dejected under a sense of his infirmities feels that this is not his resting place.—There are some Christians who labour under the convictions of religion, but feel little of its comforts: whose minds are a prey to the most disheartening anxieties; who know that Christianity is a system of mercy, but feel as if they were not included in it; who look only to the discouraging pictures of their own guilt and their own insufficiency, and whose eyes are seldom withdrawn from this gloomy contemplation to the bright and cheering spectacle of a triumphant Redeemer speaking peace to the humble and the contrite spirit, and giving the assurances of His mercy to all who trust in Him. While we are still on our pilgrimage, even the best of Christians must sometimes lay their account with these visitations of melancholy. They form part of our discipline; they remind us of the imperfections of our nature, and of our distance from the full confidence and enjoyment of God; they teach us to aspire after heaven, and to long for that eternal city, where we shall live in the presence of our Father—where with the spirits of just men made perfect we shall encircle His throne—where the hidings of his countenance shall be no longer upon us—and where, for the weariness and despondency which now oppresses every family, we shall have our hearts established in the joys of His salvation, and in the accomplishment of his promises. But while we are in the body we must feel the weight of its infirmities—our hearts are apt to fail us in the way—the joys of the Christian faith may at times abandon us—we feel the misgivings of anxiety and despair—and we weep when we remember Zion, and contrast the peace and blessedness of its mansions with this sad and weary wilderness. This is a grievous though not an incurable disease. It is the desolation of the mind; it is that sorrow of the heart which refuses at the time to be comforted. But it cannot last; it has its acme and its termination. Brighter days will succeed to it even in this world. Godly sorrow will not utterly consume its victim, or render him forever unhappy. It will at last land him in many precious consequences; it will work repentance unto salvation; it will speak peace to the spirit of the humble and oppressed penitent; it will translate him into the joys of the Christian faith. He will cast all his care upon Him who is the Redeemer of his soul; he will repose all his anxieties in the bosom of the Eternal; his sincere but imperfect obedience will be the evidence of his renewed principles. The ordinances of religion will be his delight and his refreshment; his heart will be established within him in the full confidence of his God and of his Saviour; he will have a foretaste of heaven; and the dreariness of his banishment will be alleviated by the bright anticipation before him.

Ver. 3, 4.—"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" This alludes to the contempt and mockery which the children of Israel had to sustain in the country of their banishment. The Babylonians asked them in derision for one of the songs of Zion. They loaded with ridicule the pure and venerable religion, and aggravated the suf-

ferings of the weary and oppressed exiles, by their mirth and their indecency. We are sorry to say that the resemblance still holds betwixt the Jews in a state of captivity and the Christians in the state of their pilgrimage. We have also to sustain the mockery of the profane and the unthinking. Ridicule and disdain are often the fate of sincere piety in this world. Fashion and frivolity and false philosophy have made a formidable combination against us; and the same truth, the same honesty, the same integrity of principle, which in any other cause would be esteemed as manly and respectable, is despised and laughed at when attached to the cause of the gospel and its sublime interests. Some may think that the picture is overcharged—that religion does not incur so much contempt from the world as we are insisting upon—and that the man who lives in the outward profession of Christianity, and in the practice of its different virtues, stands a higher chance for reputation in his neighbourhood than the man who tramples upon the institutions of the gospel, and lives in open defiance to its morality. This is all very true; and yet it is also true that a sincere Christian has often much to undergo from the levity and ridicule of the world. The ridicule is not annexed to the social virtues of the gospel—it is annexed to that piety which in the New Testament is made the principle of them. The morality of the gospel (and we say it in its praise) has of itself a strong claim upon the homage and admiration of the human heart—in its humanity the most amiable; in its integrity the most elevated; in its fortitude the most manly; in its deportment the most mild, and gentle, and condescending. Let a man clothe himself in the different virtues of the New Testament, and he holds himself out to us in an attitude the most graceful and the most engaging. But be not deceived. I say it is possible to admire these virtues, and yet not to admire Christianity; it is possible to confine your imagination to these genuine effects of the Christian principle, and to turn away in disgust and repugnance from the principle itself. Even though separated altogether from religion as their motive and their principle, these virtues would still remain the objects of admiration in every humanized society. It is not of contempt for the social virtues which spring from religion that I complain. They must ever be acknowledged as the finest, the most graceful accomplishment of the human character. It is of contempt for religion itself; it is of contempt for the religious principle viewed in its abstract and unmingled simplicity. There never can be contempt for the social virtues, whatever negligence may prevail in the exercise of them. But along with the admiration of these virtues, there can be, and to this hour there actually is, a very great and a very general contempt for that principle which forms the best and the only security for their existence. The ridicule is not annexed to the social virtues, but it is annexed to piety—it is annexed to reverence for the authority of God—it is annexed to faith in Christ—and to all those sincere and evangelical principles which if they flourished among men would beautify the face of society, and form the whole human race into one happy and virtuous family.

But why, it may be said, should anything be advanced that can lead to the idea that piety and the social virtues are independent of one another? God forbid that such a fair and natural alliance should ever be dissolved. But it is not Christianity which destroys the connection. It is the infidel who laughs at piety, or the lukewarm believer who dreads to be laughed at for the extravagance to which he carries it. The Christian is not for giving up the social virtues. But the open enemy and the cold friend of the gospel are for giving up piety; and while they garnish all that is right and amiable in humanity with the unsubstantial praises of their eloquence, they pour contempt on the very principle which forms our best security for the existence of virtue in the world. Let me say nothing that can degrade the social virtues in the estimation of men; but separate them from religion, and what are they? At the very best they are the virtues of this life; their office is to scatter a few fleeting joys over a short and uncertain pilgrimage, and to deck a temporary scene with blessings which are to perish

and be forgotten. Make them a part of religion and you exalt them beyond all that poet or moralist can do for them. You give them God for their object, and for their end the grandeur of eternity. No it is not the Christian who is the enemy of social virtue: it is he who sighs in all the ecstasy of sentiment over it at the very time that he digs away its foundation, and wreaks upon that piety which is its principle the cruelty of his scorn.

Now what I insist upon is, that religion is the actual victim of this scorn;—and that as the Jews in their state of captivity had to endure the mockery of their foes, so the Christians in the state of their pilgrimage have to endure a similar trial. I think that in the round of my own familiar experience, I have met with the most undeniable evidences of a pretty strong, and I am afraid a pretty general contempt for religion. Why is family worship given up during the residence of a visitor? Is it not because you dread the imputation of being puritanical?—and if you really dread the imputation, is this not a proof that it is actually laid upon all who can hold up their face to the exercises of piety? Why does a company fall so readily into a conversation about trade or politics or agriculture, but on the moment that there is the slightest approach to religion, there is an embarrassment visible on every countenance? It is a subject which all shrink from and which all are ashamed of—there is a meanness annexed to it; and though not an individual there who would not lend his fullest testimony to what was respectable in justice, or graceful in charity, yet all that is exalted in faith, and piety, and the elevation of a Christian will be suffered to pass without praise and without acknowledgment. Let a man be humane, and you love him—let him be honest, and you confide in him; but let him be religious, and I do not say that you, but that there are many in the world who would pity or despise him. It is very true that they will allow him a certain degree of respect for his religion; they will grant him a certain degree of indulgence to this peculiarity—but he must take care not to carry it too far. He must not carry it to such a length as would be offensive or outrageous to the feelings of the world. They will allow him to attend church once a day—they will allow him to sit down at the sacrament—they will allow him all that is sanctioned by fashionable example; but the moment that he begins to distinguish himself—the moment that he steps beyond the limits prescribed to him by the omnipotence of custom—the moment that he becomes more punctual, more zealous, more declared in his attachment to religion and its ordinances than his neighbours in the same rank of society—I say from that moment he must prepare himself for the contempt of the world, and feel that he has to stand on the trial of his firmness. Let him do as others, and his religion will be tolerated as decent and inoffensive; but let him do better and more than his neighbours around him, and it is all rant, all enthusiasm, all the weakness of a drivelling and unmanly superstition; and the man who has the intrepidity to announce himself as a Christian, and be true to his Saviour and God, is branded as a Methodist—as a man who has transgressed all the rules of moderation and good society—as a man who has in some measure disgraced himself by adhering to an obstinate peculiarity, for which among a great proportion of his fellows, he will meet with no sympathy and no admiration.

Ver. 5, 6.—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." These verses express the determination of the Jews in their state of captivity; and let it be your determination in the state of your pilgrimage. Like them you may have to brave the contempt of neighbours; but think of the grandeur of eternity, and tell me, with such an object before you, if this world's contempt is not worth the braving? Live by the powers of a world to come. Think of the littleness of time; think of the greatness of eternity; think of the cloud of witnesses that at this moment encompass you; think of the spirits of just men who have gone before you; think of the angels

that are now looking upon you from the high eminences of heaven; think of that kind, that gracious Redeemer who died for your offences, but now sees you from His seat of glory at the Father's right hand; think of the omniscience of God; and shall all the contempt and discouragement of the world make you falter from that path of duty and perseverance which will conduct you to the Jerusalem above? You sit at the Lord's table, and you do well. May it be a refreshment to you by the way. If your spirits are likely to fail, may this feast of love strengthen and restore them. May it send you back to the world more prepared to resist its temptations—to withstand its contempt and opposition—to discharge its duties—and to improve it as your scene of exercise and preparation. My prayer to heaven is—that your faith may be invigorated, your hearts purified, your gloomy apprehensions dispelled, your prospects brightened, and your joy made full in the strength of the Lord, and in the consolation of his promises.

DECEMBER 8, 1810.

ADDRESS.

YOU have now finished the greatest solemnity of our blessed faith, and may it not be an unprofitable solemnity. I trust that the sentiments you feel at the table will never abandon you—that you will carry them with you to the world, and that your religion, instead of being the mere obedience of a day or of a festival, will rise to the Father of Spirits like the incense of a perpetual offering. You are weak, but God can perfect His strength in your weakness; you are corrupt, but Christianity provides for this corruption; you are guilty, but the grace of God is free to all who return from the evil of their ways, and offer at the throne of heaven their faith and their humility and their repentance. Some are apt to give themselves up to despair because they feel the weight of their own infirmities. But this is no discovery of their own. Christianity supposes them to be beset with infirmity—it proceeds upon this as the basis of that dispensation which the Saviour introduced into the world. It is true that they are weak and guilty; and it is to save them from the despair of this weakness and guilt that Christianity was instituted. In the grace of the gospel there is an ample remedy held out to all who feel themselves in these circumstances. There is the efficacy of Christ's atonement—there is the dying love of a powerful and affectionate Redeemer—there is the voice of His mercy—there is the tenderness of His compassion—there is the graciousness of His invitation, Come to me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

It is to commemorate the love of this kind and powerful Redeemer that you have this day joined in the Sacrament, and you have done well by commemorating His love. You have made the profession to heaven that you love Him; and I refer you to the Scriptures for the best evidence and testimony that you can give of that love—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." How shall I know then that you have partaken worthily? God knows, for He sees your hearts, but I have not that advantage. I cannot penetrate through the disguises of hypocrisy—I cannot unmask the pretensions of insincerity and deceit—I cannot take my secret stand, and with the glance of an all-seeing eye detect the artifice, the dissimulation, the coldness, the hardened insensibility, that lurks in the bosom of an unworthy communicant. I have nothing before me by which I can decide the question—I can only decide upon the outward appearances which come under my observation; and it is impossible that in the short time of a few hours such appearances can have occurred as would enable me to resolve the question. All that passes before man is a grave, a decent, and an orderly ceremonial. I see seriousness upon almost every countenance. I see an apparent reverence for this affecting solemnity of our holy religion. I see the marks of attention in every eye; and were I entitled to pronounce upon so short an experience I would say that I see nothing but symptoms the most promising and the most satisfactory. But an important question remains. Is all this to last

Will the good feelings, will the pious purposes, will the holy voice of penitence and amendment be persisted in and called into sustained and habitual exhibition? God alone can answer this at present.

For He alone knows the character of every communicant—He knows the strength or the weakness of your purposes—He knows the sincerity or the falsehood of your pretensions—He knows whether you have made the engagement in that spirit of presumption which will be disappointed, or in that spirit of humility which his good Spirit will cause to prosper and to triumph. For me to say anything with certainty upon this subject I must have a little more experience. I can only judge the soundness of your principles by their effects—I can only judge the sincerity of your repentance by your reformation—I can only judge of the evangelical power of your faith by its yielding in abundance the peaceable fruits of righteousness. When I look abroad at the right season of the year over the face of the country, I see it glowing in all the pride and luxuriance of vegetation—I see the flower in its loveliness—I see the stalk which supports it—I see the leaves and the spreading branches; but the root to me is invisible, nor would I have known that the root was there had it not been for the vegetation which rises from it. When I look abroad upon the human beings of my neighbourhood, I see nothing but outward appearances—I hear their words—I see their behaviour—I mark their conduct—I listen to their conversation—I observe their actions. The root and the principle of all this is to me invisible. God alone can have a direct view of it, but I can infer the healthy root from the flourishing vegetation.

Be a Christian then in your behaviour, and I will infer that you are a Christian in your principles. Let me see the flourishing vegetation, and I infer a healthy root, and look forward to an abundant harvest; let me see the fruits of righteousness in your conduct, and I infer that there is a root of sound and evangelical principle within you, and I look forward to an abundant recompense of reward. May the solemnity of this day be the means in the hands of Providence of adding to the vigour of this root—may it be watered by the dew of heaven—may it become more steadfast and immovable in your souls—may it be refreshed by the blessing of the Lord, that it may be fitted for bearing such an abundant crop of virtue and righteousness as will redound to His glory and to the honour of His religion in the world. If in the course of my acquaintance with you in after life I see you obedient to the gospel, attentive to its ordinances, holding up your face for its honour and its interests, zealous in promoting it, mindful of its duties, observant of its peace, its love, its candour, its fair dealing, its honesty, I shall then infer, in as far as it is competent for fallen man to do, that the grace of God has operated within you, and settled in your hearts a reign of faith, and charity, and righteousness.

SERMON X.

*The Living Water.**

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."—JOHN iv. 10.

IT must occur to every reader of the verse before us, that something more is meant by *living water* than the natural element. There is a sense which

* During the years 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, Dr. Chalmers kept an accurate record of his preaching, from which the following and some subsequent notices are extracted:—

JOHN iv. 10.—Preached at Dairsie, 14th June, 1812. At Kilmany Sacrament, 21st June, 1812. At Edinburgh, Lady Glenorchy's, 19th July, 1812. At Anstruther, 23rd August, 1812. At Denbog, 26th July, 1813.

lies under it—a thing signified, of which water, the subject of conversation betwixt our Saviour and the woman, was only the sign. And it might appear wonderful that this did not occur to the woman herself—that she did not seem to be aware of any hidden import of signification in the term as used by our Lord; but, conceiving that it was still the true or literal water that He was speaking of, she asked how He could have of this water, as the well was deep, and He had nothing to draw with. The truth is, that though the term *living* is calculated to suggest some high and spiritual acceptation to us, it was not calculated to suggest the same thing to her. The original phrase for living water was applied by the people of those times to water in motion, or running water. It had two senses, and she, as was most natural, took it up in the sense in which it was most commonly understood. But could living water, in this sense, be drawn up from the bottom of a well? Yes, if the spring was of such force as to give velocity and sensible motion to the water, it was still called living water. It is probable that the water of the well at which Christ and the woman of Samaria were then seated was living water. Certain it is that in the book of Genesis, xxvi. 19, where it is mentioned that Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water, it is called living water in the original language, and it is so marked on the margin of our Bibles. In the same manner in the book of Leviticus, xiv. 5, where the priest is ordered to kill a bird over running water, the words employed in the original are the same in signification with those which our Saviour made use of when He talked of living water in the text before us. This explains the circumstance of the woman's still talking of drawing living water, and drawing it out of a well. She was misled by the ambiguity of the term; and this ambiguity threw a deeper disguise over the sublime and spiritual sense of our Saviour to the woman of Samaria than it does to a reader of our common translation.

It were well if it were in the power of a mere critical explanation to throw aside the disguise, and to secure a ready access into the human heart for the spirit and doctrine of our Saviour. But I am afraid that the misapprehension of scriptural truth lies somewhat deeper than in the mere misapprehension of language—and that examples could be named of profound and accomplished grammarians, who have given the strength of their days to the elucidation of the Bible, and yet, both in heart and in conception, were utter strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus. The ignorance charged upon the woman of Samaria is not peculiar to her. It exists among the thousands of every country where Christianity is established, and where the title of Christian is prefixed to the name of every individual. There are multitudes that know not the gift of God, and that know not Him who proclaims and offers it. They know not what the gift is, and they know not how or where to apply for it. The country teems with Bibles and with churches, and yet they maintain a determined ignorance in the midst of all their opportunities—their days on earth unenlightened by the guidance of that heavenly instruction which is to be found in the Bible—and, when they come to resign their temporal life, utter strangers to the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, whom to know is life everlasting.

I count it, my brethren, one of the most striking exhibitions which theology can furnish, that a man may give the strength of his days to the labour of its most difficult and profound investigations, and be, after all, a stranger to what is called in the Bible the spiritual discernment of the truth as it is in Jesus—that after he has done all which earnest attention and solid understanding, and the talent of pouring upon his subject the light of a brilliant and convincing illustration, and every other faculty of his natural constitution can accomplish, he may still be labouring under all the blindness of him into whose mind the light of the glorious gospel of Christ has never yet entered—that the terms of "God," and "judgment," and "salvation," and "grace," may be recognized by him as well

known sounds, and may even be employed by him in such a way as to make out a sound and pertinent and irresistible argument, and yet the import of these terms may not be so perceived by him as to be at all felt or appreciated in such a way as a distinct sense of their meaning would infallibly lead him to do. Oh, it is interesting to observe how, when genius has exhausted all its resources, and that mind which would have carried its possessor to the sublimest attainments of human science has lavished all its exertions on the Bible, the man may still be in a state of positive deadness as to the living meaning and the practical influence of any of its truths; or, in other words, those truths are actually not seen by him. They do not come upon him with the impression of their reality. They may form the elements of many an ingenious speculation, and enter with appropriateness into many a process of reasoning, but by him they are not so believed and not so looked to as to give its prevailing bent to the heart and the life and the affections. He may even be sensible of all this, and wish it to be remedied, and bring his every natural power to the object; and yet he may find that all, all is unavailing. There is a barrier between him and the saving knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, over which all the energies of the best endowed intellect cannot carry him. Nay, he may perceive the most illiterate of his neighbours to have got beyond him, and to look on the field of revelation with such a clear and affecting perception of all its objects as he cannot attain to. Such experiences as these are valuable, my brethren. They go to confirm the doctrine of a spiritual illumination. They harmonize with that utterance of our Saviour when He says, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes." They put us all, as to the gospel of Christ, on the same footing of dependence—they reduce us to the attitude of little children. Nor do I know a finer exhibition than when a man of gigantic faculties is brought down to this, and knocks for light at a door which he cannot open—and feeling that he has done nothing till he obtain such a view of spiritual and unseen matters that believing on them from his heart the fruit may be holiness, he, after discovering the utter incompetency of all native and unaided exertion to obtain for him such a view, is at length reduced to the earnestness and to the humility of prayer.

Let me attempt, in the following discourse, to expose this in its various particulars. Some may, by the blessing of heaven, attend to us with the hearing ear; and the hearing ear may, by the same blessing, be accompanied with the understanding heart. God may achieve the greatest things by the very humblest of His instruments; and I count the greatest and most interesting of all events to be—what is unnoticed by the world, and what the pen of history seldom records but in characters of contempt—that grand transition by which a human soul passes out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. Could this light be only communicated, you would no longer be at a loss to understand the gift that is held out, and the quarter where you were to apply for it. You would ask of Him who has both the will and the ability to give, and He would do to you what He promises to do to the woman of Samaria—He would give you living water.

First, then, many know not in the general that the blessings and the privileges of the gospel are a gift. Without descending to a more particular explanation at present, this living water includes in it all the blessings and all the privileges of the gospel. The ignorance which I now desire to expose lies in conceiving these blessings and privileges to be not a gift but a claim—not a free and gratuitous exercise of kindness, but the payment of an account—not what you receive as a present, but what you work for and obtain in the shape of well earned wages. Now this delusion will have its own peculiar effect upon two classes of professing Christians. There is one class who will look at their own performances, and think they have done enough. This will be their confidence, and the rejoicing of their hope, that they have made

out their claim. They will not ask of Jesus Christ—for why ask of another to do for them what they conceive they have done for themselves? why request as a present what they think they can demand as their due? or why have recourse to the interposition of another for securing them that which they hope to obtain upon the strength of their own actual obedience? Observe the effect of this confidence. It is unnecessary to demonstrate that this obedience on which they found their security is a most polluted and most unfinished offering, and will not stand examination when tried by the purity and the requisitions of the Divine law. There are only two ways in which we can make good a claim to the reward of the law: we must either bring up the obedience to the standard of the law, or we must bring down the standard of the law to the actual state of the obedience. Let us try the first. Let us sum up all the capabilities of our nature; let every power and every energy within be pressed into the service—and to give all fairness to the experiment, let the purest and the noblest individual of our race be invited to the enterprise of bringing up his obedience to the high requisitions of heaven. If the experiment has never been tried, what is this but to say that the general feeling of human impotency and human helplessness has condemned every individual amongst us to the inactivity of despair? If the experiment has been tried, I beg to know the result of it. Can any man tell me that he has seen the individual who has run the animating course of virtue, and reached its termination with all the triumphs of success upon his forehead? When I speak of virtue, I ask you to feel the mighty import of the term: it is setting the law of God always before you—it is cherishing the love of God as your supreme and reigning affection—and it is making every unfair object of selfishness give way to the love of your neighbour, which flows from the love of God as its likeness and its accompaniment. Have you seen any such? I am not asking about the worse and the better and the best. You will meet with better and worse in the robber's den or in the dungeons of offended justice. I do not deny that there are gradations of character in the world, but this does not say but that the world is a vast receptacle of sinners, and that the best of these sinners is a sinner still.

Conceive therefore that a man should persist in the delusion I am attempting to expose; conceive him to look on heaven as a claim and not as a gift; conceive him to put forth all the energies of his nature, and all the faculties of a most happily endowed constitution to the enterprise of making out this claim. In other words, let him embark himself on a career of firm, resolute, and strenuous obedience, and then will you see the spectacle of a man trying to win a place in Paradise by his works. It is quite evident that this man has brought down upon himself the very principle by which he will be tried in the day of reckoning. He surely has no right to expect any shelter on that day from the Mediatorship of Christ, if on this the day of his probation he has made a deliberate rejection of all the benefits of that Mediatorship. If you put the peculiarities of the gospel away from you, and take up your chance for immortality on another ground, you surely cannot complain if that be the ground on which the examination of you shall be taken up and carried forward at the time that you stand before the judgment-seat. It is the ground you have chosen here, and as it is your own ground you will be tried upon it there; and if there be any among you, my brethren, hardy enough to think that you can win the prize of immortality by the might and the exercise of such attributes of strength and character as belong to you—then remember that the inquiry on that day will be not whether there is evidence that while you lived in the world you so lived in it as to prove that you accepted of heaven as an offered gift, but whether you so lived in it as to have gained and substantiated a claim to heaven. In the former case you looked to the law, and you compared its demands with your capabilities, and the result of the comparison was such an humbling view of the guilt and insufficiency that covered you, as led you to feel the need of

a something else on which your dependence could be laid; and feeling thus you clung to the offered grace of the Saviour, and you kept by it. In the latter case, you also may look to the law and look at the same time to your own capabilities of obedience, and whether you see the demands of this law in all their rigour and in all their loftiness I know not; but by the act of holding out against the gift, and attempting to substantiate the claim, you have certainly somehow or other come to the practical conclusion that you can master all its exactions—that you are a match for it and for all its commandments, and you utterly refuse the sentiment of the Apostle when he tells us of what the law cannot do through the weakness of the flesh, even that it cannot exalt the character to a pure and undeviating loyalty. I am not, my brethren, speaking of a case that is imaginary. The delusion to which I am adverting has a very general existence in the world, and carries in its very essence the great principle of legalism. This is a principle natural to the human heart; it is a principle which is ever coming into play throughout the intercourse we hold with each other, and is upheld and fostered by almost all the transactions of civil society. There is not a more familiar feeling than that of the claim which one man has or thinks he has upon another. I have lent my neighbour a sum of money, and I have a claim upon him for repayment. I have done him an obliging piece of service, and I have a claim upon him for gratitude. I have acquitted myself of all that is asked or expected from me as a member of society, and I have a claim upon it for justice to my reputation and my character. The feeling of such claims—the consciousness of all that worth and merit which entitle you to them—the sense of provocation when they are withheld from you—the clamorous demand for equity, and the passionate outcry of injured sensibilities when that equity is denied—all these may be observed to give a daily and a perpetual exercise to the heart of every man as he moves through the relations whether of domestic or of general society. It is not to be wondered at that a feeling so familiarly and so frequently called forth in the transactions between a man and his fellows, should also insinuate itself into the heart, and be called forth in the case of transactions that go on between a man and his God. When I look on men with a reference to the question of what kind of conduct I should maintain towards them, the most natural and general feeling about this question is, that I shall give what is due to them, and that I shall look for what is due from them. When I look on God with a reference to the same subject, nothing more natural and I am sure nothing more general than that obstinate principle of legality in virtue of which I transfer the very same sentiment about Him that I have about my fellows in society: I shall give what is due to Him, and I shall look for what is due from Him. With this sentiment many start upon a course of reformation towards God, and I have no objection that they should do so, would they only at the same time make a right computation of the amount of what is due to the Heavenly Lawgiver; would they only look at the breadth of His law; would they only estimate the degree of His rightful ascendency over all the creatures He has formed; would they only, while they assimilate Him to man in the circumstance that a something is due to Him, also distinguish Him from man by those very essential circumstances in which he differs from them, that He made us and He upholds us, and He has a claim to the subordination of every movement and of every faculty which belongs to us; then I should not despair after letting them understand what the amount of that something due to God was—I should not despair of convincing them how fearfully hazardous it is to remain upon the ground on which they are standing. Now they misjudge the matter altogether if they think that, because equal to the performance of those reciprocal duties which bind and consolidate the system of human society, they are therefore equal to the performance of those duties which bind together the fellowship of peace between God and the creatures who have sprung from Him. I should not despair

of carrying their acquiescence in the doctrine that, however well and however reputable they may find themselves in reference to their fellow-sinners around them, they in every one point of obedience fall short of the glory of God, and are accumulating every day upon their heads the guilt of His violated requisitions—that when assembled around the tribunal which is to put upon them the awards of eternity, they will not be tried by such principles as are gathered out of the constitution of human society—they will be tried by those unalterable principles of equity which fixedly and essentially belong to the cause of God on the one hand, and of God's creatures on the other; and that, therefore, unless they are driven out of the legality of their feelings and their contemplations upon this subject, they are in despite of the offered salvation seeking to establish such a righteousness of their own as never, never can avail them; they are pitching at the impracticable aim of keeping upsides with a law which, with all the strenuousness and all the frequency of their performances, they shall never satisfy; they are braving the penalties of a code which in its most leading particulars they are every day breaking—and therefore let them cease to wonder any longer that though they talk of virtue and multiply their performances, and are both aiming at and doing a number of things which wear a semblance and a character of religion, the preacher of the gospel should still look at them, and, impressed with the danger and insecurity of their condition, should not be satisfied.

I have not yet said whether I thought or not, that those people had adequate conceptions of the law in all the extent and purity which belongs to it. I have no hesitation in saying now that it is an inadequate conception of this which practically lies at the bottom of their delusion. Did they perceive the law in the whole strictness of the obligation it lays upon them—did they think aright of the truth and majesty of Him who imposed it—did they contemplate as they ought the unalterable dignity of His government, and how for all its stability and all its respect it depended on the unfailing obedience of its subjects, or on the due execution of its defied and violated sanctions upon the disobedient—did they carry in their minds a very small fraction indeed of that high impression of God's holiness and justice which actuates the every feeling which works and circulates among the hosts of paradise—then humbled by a sense of their distance and their shortness, and of the mighty gulf that lies between the high requisitions of God and the paltry attainments of the very best of them, would every one of them be convinced of sin, and be convinced of their need of a Saviour along with it.

By the law is the knowledge of sin, says Paul. Without the commandment, or without the right sense of the commandment, I revived; but when the commandment came, a right sense had visited my heart; when I got to know that the law was spiritual, I was led to perceive how holy and how just and how good it was—when the commandment came to me in this light, sin revived, and I died.

I have already observed that there are only two ways in which we can make out a claim to the rewards of the law. The first way is by bringing up the obedience to the standard of the law. This we have already expatiated upon. The second way is by bringing down the law to the standard of the obedience. This, my brethren, we conceive to be really and practically the way in which the legalists of this world seek to find something like a settlement of peace with their consciences. As I said just now, they do not look at the law in all the spirituality and greatness of its requisitions; they soften the rigour of its exactions—they take up vague and indefinite ideas of the indulgence of God, in order to evade the close pursuit of his purity and his justice—they form a standard for themselves, and it is a standard degraded by the whole distance of an infinity under the standard of that law which was proclaimed by God Himself for the homage and obedience of the world that He had called into existence. It is not the first but the second that is the real and practical way in which the rejectors of the gospel of Christ contrive to find peace to their

consciences, and at the same time to retain the system of heaven being a claim they are able to make out, rather than a gift for which they are indebted to a free and unconditional act of liberality on the part of its dispenser; or in other words, instead of attempting to bring up the obedience to the standard of the law of heaven—an attempt which I believe that out of Christ and away from the influence of His doctrine is never made, or at least never persevered in—all the men who look upon heaven as a claim, and are at the same time satisfied themselves, bring down the standard of the law to the actual state of their obedience.

Now by so doing you bring down the standard of Heaven's law to a sinful obedience; you pull down the everlasting principles which give support and stability to the throne of the Almighty's justice; you make the tribunal of God speak a language which would degrade any court of law or administration in the world. As we can get none to act up to the purity of our requisition, let us bestow our reward on the best we can find. Our dignity and our truth have been most disgracefully trampled upon—let us take the affront, and soften it all over by an act of compromise and connivance—let us smile on the malefactor who has made a mockery of our government. It is true we hate guilt, and we have uttered against it our solemn denunciations, but these denunciations have all been treated with contempt, and we find it convenient to recall them. We would pass an act of forgiveness, but this will not satisfy the criminals at our bar. They do not supplicate a gift, they challenge a reward; and we, by accommodating to the high tone of their pretensions must bring down our law to their obedience, and say that we are satisfied. That guilt which we cannot look upon without abhorrence we are called upon to welcome with the language of approbation and flattery, and the high truth and harmony of Heaven must be all given up to the pride and ignorance of those who rank among the humblest of Heaven's offspring. Enough of this, my brethren; it will positively not bear a hearing Take the gift upon the footing on which it is offered to you. It is not a claim; and if you misconceive the free grace of the gospel, you either acquiesce in a low standard of obedience, or your life becomes one restless and unceasing struggle in pursuit of an object you will never reach: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to His mercy hath he saved us." View your salvation in this light and it comes amply within the reach of all, and at the taking of all who will believe in the reality of the offer. View it in any other, and you throw it at an unattainable distance from the strongest and soundest and healthiest of the species. He never will be able to fulfil the conditions of the first covenant by the works of his own righteousness. The terrors of this violated covenant are upon him, and by turning from the unspeakable gift in this the accepted time, he aggravates these terrors by the weight of another sentence and another threatening—"How shall he escape if he neglect so great a salvation?"

I call upon you here, my brethren, to remark how different in amount of duteous and reverential morality towards God is the feeling of those who look forward to heaven on the footing of the gospel, from the feeling of those who look forward to it on the footing of a presumptuous legalism. The former look to the actual state of their obedience, and the impression it makes upon them is, that this obedience is not good enough for God—it has not rendered enough of homage to His law—it has not come up to their conceptions of that purity and of that loveliness and of that devotion and of that good will to all around them which form the attributes and the accomplishment of virtue. It is not adequate to their sentiment of what is due to our Maker, or of what is equal to a full measure of righteousness, or of what man ought to be in his heart and in his habits and throughout the whole currency of his life and conversation. To link our prospects of immortality with such an obedience as this, it would be necessary that we should not feel so high a sentiment as we actually entertain of what is due to God. It would be necessary that we should have a

grosser and a scantier conception of the measure of righteousness. It would be necessary for us to think that it is quite enough for man to be just as he is, and that we need neither to fear nor to regret though his heart and his habits have not reached a nobler and a steadier elevation. Now, what is this but to say, my brethren, that while the advocates for heaven, as a claim, arrogate to themselves the whole credit and distinction of being the men of morality and good works, and charge the advocates of heaven, as a gift, with a negligent style of sentiment on the subject of duties and of practical righteousness—it is, in fact, a stricter and a purer and a loftier estimate of virtue in all its greatness, and of obedience in all its rigour, which lies at the bottom of the humble acquiescence of the latter in the peculiarities of the gospel. It is just because they think so highly of God and of His right to the lowly subordination of all His creatures, that they despair of ever reaching His rewards on the footing of having followed all the behests, or of having acted up to all the requirements of loyalty. The humility of the Christian faith and a high tone of duteous feeling towards God, so far from being what I know a very large class of cold and moderate Christians conceive them to be—so far from being on terms of contradiction with each other, do, in fact, communicate—the first to the second, and the second back again to the first—a mutual fervency and intensity. Give me to see the law in all the breadth of its requisitions, and in all the solemnity of its high and unalterable sanctions, and there is nothing more calculated than such a sight to stir up within me the pervading conviction of sin. When the commandment came to Paul sin revived. Give me to be penetrated with this conviction—and nothing more calculated to shake me out of all my presumptuous dependence on heaven as a claim—nothing more calculated to distance me from a pretension so lofty—nothing more calculated to make me pass upon myself, at the tribunal of conscience, a sentence of condemnation, and lead me to look upon every hope that rested on the foundation of merit as blasted and undone. When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Give me to feel that out of Christ I am in a state of death, that the wrath of God is ever abiding on me, and that there is nothing to shield my guilty head from the arrows of His righteous indignation—and nothing, my brethren, more fitted to reduce me to the exclamations of despair, or to the anxious inquiries after a place of refuge, or to the earnest attempt of casting about for one who might hide me in some pavilion of safety till these billows shall overpass. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Give me a man thus devoting himself to the employment of seeking, and if there be any truth in the saying, that they who seek shall find, there is nothing more calculated than this to guide his footsteps to Him who is a refuge from the tempest and a hiding-place from the storm. "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now what is it, my brethren, that has carried us forward to this conclusion? What is it that has thus stripped us of all self-dependence, and brought us in holy and grateful acknowledgment to the Saviour? What is it that has thus led us to the foot of the cross, and made us to feel that there, and there alone, do hope and pardon and reconciliation emanate upon a guilty world? Was it that low sense of morality which is so often imputed to your men of evangelical doctrine and piety that guided our footsteps to such a landing place? Yes, my brethren, it was a low sense of the actual morality of man that originated the whole of this process; but along with this there was also a high sense of the incumbent morality of man—there was the very feeling which actuated the apostle Paul, and gave direction to the whole line of reasoning by which he was conducted from the doctrine of the spirituality of the law to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It was setting up a high standard of virtue upon the degraded state of performance which led to this as the result of the masterly and invincible argument that runs through his Epistle to the Romans; and therefore do I repeat it,

my brethren, and recommend it to you as a proposition which cannot be enough laboured and enough insisted on that the theology which receives eternal life as a gift, and acceptance with God as an act of gratuitous kindness, and translation into His favour as a matter of free grace, offered to all and at the taking of all through the appointed Mediator—that this theology, so far from being blind to morality, so far from having any obtuseness about the claims of duty and of the law, so far from being devoid of reverence for its authority over man, makes all this to be the starting principle of its faith, and proceeds throughout the whole career of its reasonings on the august character of virtue, and the extent of its immutable obligations.

And this, my brethren, conducts me to another effect of that system which sets up for heaven as a claim to be made out by man. It is not a system of abstract doctrines that I am now combating—it is a practical error by which the consciences of men are deluded into the feeling of peace when there is no peace. I want to convince them how much they aggravate the hatefulness of all their pigmy and superficial obedience by this act of false confidence on their part. Sure I am that they would both feel and understand it if they were placed in the very same predicament in which they place God. Did one of their fellow-men fall grievously short of his reverence or his justice towards them, would not that bare act be enough of itself to inflict upon their bosoms the feeling of provocation? Now, think how this feeling would be affected if the man who had thus injured you discovered no sense of the wrong he had inflicted—if he carried it towards you with as much tranquillity and unconcern as if he had done for you and towards you all you had any title to expect. If his conduct speak it to be his actual feeling and his sincere opinion that he had treated you just as you deserved, and that there was nothing in some palpable misdoing of which he had been guilty that conferred upon you any right to challenge or to remonstrate with him—think you not that this want of feeling for his misconduct towards you would aggravate your feeling of provocation towards him? Have you no recollection, my brethren, in your past experience within this department of human intercourse, that when a neighbour injures you there is nothing that goes farther to soften the whole impression of it, and to pluck from the injury its sting, than a becoming contrition and an adequate sense of its enormity on his part? and, on the contrary, should there be no such contrition—if the man who has wronged you evinces no feeling of compunction, and utters no acknowledgment of guilt—if he still continues to carry it towards you in a way that bespeaks him to be quite callous and insensible about the evil of his misdoings—is not this, my brethren, the very ingredient which gives its chief bitterness to the whole provocation? You perhaps are willing to be reconciled; you are ready, even as God is with us all, to forgive if he repent. But he feels not that he stands in need of repentance; he thinks not that he is an object for forgiveness; he is not conscious that he has done you an injury, and will persist in his secure and smiling and confident approach after all that you have suffered at his hand. O, my brethren, is not all this fitted to deepen the injury, and to widen the breach, and to make the controversy more irreparable, and to kindle in the heart of the injured man a more festering impression of rancour and discontent than ever? All this is very plain, and it should just be as plain that when sinners entertain the hope of heaven as a claim, they, by the very act of doing so, aggravate in God's sight the whole of their sinfulness. If they refuse it on the footing of a boon, they carry the insulting sentiment along with them that they have done nothing towards their Maker which stands in need of any forgiveness, or of any atonement. It is clear that with all their talk about virtue, they have at least a very obtuse feeling about the glory and the extent of it; for it is a very humble portion indeed of its attainments which satisfies them. It is clear that they aggravate excessively all the guilt they have contracted by being so blind as they are, so insensible as they are to the malignity and extent of their guilt; and thus it is, that while the gospel is

freely offered to all as a defence against the threatenings of a violated law, the rejection of the gospel imparts to all those violations a greater foulness and enormity than ever, and will muster up against those who add security to sin a more scowling array of terrors than before, and will bring upon them a deeper and a sorer condemnation from the majesty of the offended Lawgiver. How shall they escape if they neglect so great salvation?

But there is another class of professing Christians who labour under the same misconception—that the salvation of the Gospel is not a gift, but a claim, but who, unlike the former, instead of converting this idea into an argument for false security, convert it into an argument for despair. The former looked at their own performance and were satisfied—the latter look at their own performance too, and looking at it with a more intelligent and discerning eye, they are not satisfied. There is a lurking sentiment about them, that salvation is, somehow or other, the reward of their righteousness—and the conscience, faithful to its office, says that this righteousness they want. This delusion throws a darkening veil over all their anticipations of futurity. They know not the gift of God, and in the face of an offer, held out without any exception or reserve to all who labour and are heavy laden—do they refuse to be comforted, and give themselves up to all the agitations of religious melancholy. This is a peculiar case, and it often bids defiance to all the management of human wisdom and human experience. An argument sometimes employed for soothing these unhappy agitations, is, Why be discouraged?—you are not so great a sinner as you apprehend yourself to be, and certainly not worse than your neighbours around. To prefer such an argument as this, is to chime in with the very principle which it should be your first object to extirpate. It is not because you are not so great a sinner that I would have you to be comforted; but it is because Jesus Christ is so great a Saviour: it is not the smallness of the sin, but the greatness of Him who died for it. I would have you to be satisfied, but not with yourself, for this would be to lull you asleep by the administratio of a poisoned opiate. I would have yo to listen to that loud and widely sound ing call—"Look unto me all ye end of the earth, and be saved." I woul have you to look unto Jesus; and i truth and friendship have a power t charm you into tranquillity, you hav them here. I would never cease t press the salvation of the gospel upo you as a gift; and as faith comes b hearing, and hearing by the word o God, I would call into action these ap pointed instruments for producing i the heart of the despairing sinner th faith which accepts the offer, and whic holds it fast. I cannot ascend int heaven to bring down Jesus again upo the world, that you may hear the kind ness which fell from His lips, and se the countenance most frankly expressive of it; but I can bring the word which He left behind Him nigh unto you. I can assure you, upon the faith of tha word which never lies, that what He was on earth He is still in heaven; and if in the history of the New Testamen He was never found to send a diseased petitioner disappointed away, be as sured that when He took up His body to the right hand of the everlasting throne, He took up all His kind and warm and generous sympathies along with Him. I cannot show you Him in person, but I can reveal Him to the eye of your mind as sitting there; and if you array Him in any other character than in those of love and mildness and long-suffering, you do Him an injustice He no longer speaks in His own person, but He speaks in the person of those to whom He has committed the work of reconciliation; and in the confidence that He will not falsify His own commission, or fall back by a single inch from the terms of it, we stand here as the ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. I would have you to know the gift of God. I would have you to look upon it in the simplicity of an offer, on the one hand, and of a joyful and confiding acceptance on the other. When He was on earth great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them. Come to Him with your disease—the

disease of a guilty and despairing mind. Do not think that either the will or the power of healing you is wanting. You approach Him in the most peculiar and in the greatest of His capacities, when you approach Him as the physician of souls; and be assured that the voice which He uttered in the hearing of His countrymen is of standing authority and signification to the very latest ages of the world—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes! if rest is to be found at all, it must be given. It is upon the footing of a gift that I offer it to you. Not that you are worthy to receive the present, but that it is a present worthy of His generosity to bestow. Take it. There is not a single passage in the Bible to exclude you from this act of confidence. Be not afraid—only believe—and according to your faith, so will it be done unto you.

It is remarkable enough, my brethren, that the false peace of him who is satisfied with the measure of his own performances, and the disquietude of him who wastes himself away in the agitations of religious melancholy, should both have one common ingredient. With both of them there is a strong adhering impression in their minds, that in order to deserve heaven they must somehow or other make out their claim to it. The former underrates the expense and the difficulty of making out this claim; and on the strength of a few peaceable and neighbourly accomplishments, will he cherish all the tranquillity of hope, even though his heart be alienated from God, and in every one point of its exactions he not only falls short of, but flies in the direct face of His spiritual law. The latter brings the law to a truer estimate—to a larger view of the extent and spirituality of its requirements, perceives most distinctly the shortness and the unworthiness of which the other is insensible, but sharing with him in the conception that heaven must be prosecuted as a claim, he consumes all his energies and fritters away all his comfort, and drags out the days of a dark and wearisome existence in an enterprise through which no device of human wisdom and no strength of human exertion will ever successfully carry him. It is not, perhaps, generally adverted to, but it is not the less true, that there remains in the heart of every melancholy inquirer a strong taint and remainder of legalism. What else is it that forms an obstacle to that peace he is so earnestly aspiring after? Why should he feel such an obstinate and immovable discomfort on the subject of his own sins and deficiencies? Why is he continually postponing his confidence in God, and his peaceful fellowship with God, till somehow or other he gets these sins and deficiencies to depart away from him? Wherefore is it that he will not make the transition which the bidding of the Gospel fairly warrants him to make, and in virtue of which he may come to the Saviour this moment as he is, and enter into acceptance with God through the open door of Christ's Mediatorship; and for the dark and terrible emotions which are now raising a tempest in his inner man, why does he not take hold of the offered forgiveness, and have a rejoicing sense of the favour of heaven—with a mind at rest from all its fears? Why is he not even now in that state of serenity and enjoyment which would arise from a grateful sense of the Redeemer's services, and from the quiet assurance of a firm and confident reconciliation? Why, my brethren, the reason is just because he does not see forgiveness to be an offer—just because he is blind to that most essential character of the Gospel dispensation, that it is all a matter of grace—just because there is a darkening shroud which mantles from the eye of his spirit that benignant feature of Christianity, in virtue of which there beams from it the freest and kindliest expression of good-will to the children of men. I shall at least tell him one thing, that on his present track of mere exertion he never will find his way to that peace after which he is so earnestly aspiring. I want not to discourage his exertion; but I want to let him know that if he ever should come to solid tranquillity of heart about the concerns of his immortality, it will be by that very sight of the Gospel which I am now labouring to set before him; it will be by the acceptance of all its privileges and of all its blessings on the footing of a present; it will be

by perceiving that pardon is gratuitously held out to him; and there is no one point of reformation to which he can ever carry himself that will entitle him to cherish the expectation of God's favour on another ground, or to feel anything else than that it is just the offered pardon which forms all the dependence he can build upon and all the security he can cling to. Why then postpone by a single moment longer the translation of your mind out of this state of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel? Why not hearken diligently even now to God's declaration of Himself, as God in Christ reconciling the world, and not imputing to them their trespasses? The simple acceptance of the gift will be the footing at last on which the peace of an established Christianity is to take possession of your hearts, if ever it take possession of them at all. Why, then, at the instant of time in which I am addressing you, keep any longer at a distance from the gift, and hold out any longer so sullenly and so suspiciously against the frank and generous offer of it? Why work for another day separate from Christ when Christ says to you all, Come to me now, and I will lift the burden of despondency away from you—ay, and cause you even to work with a spring and an energy of performance to which you will ever remain a stranger while the heavy load of your present fears and your present discomforts still continues to oppress you? It is by an act of trust in and willing obedience to such a call as this that the grand transition will be made from the spirit of bondage to the spirit of adoption. You will not, my brethren, be in a state of greater readiness for effecting this transition by persisting in the spirit of bondage for some weeks or months longer from the time at which I am now addressing you. Let it therefore be your business now to look to the Gospel in its character of freeness—to lay hold of it agreeably to the urgency of its own invitations—to keep fast by it as an assurance of good-will, the fulfilment of which is unto all and upon all that believe. Sure I am that could we detach from your bosom that poisonous ingredient of sentiment by which separately from the Gospel, you look on heaven as a claim, the charm which now binds down your spirit to melancholy as by a spell of resistless operation would instantly be dissipated, and you would close with the offered gift; and just in proportion as you believed the truths of the Bible would you have quietness and joy in the felt possession of it; and from the moment that the ignorance of my text was chased away, and you began to know the gift of God, from that moment would this verse of Scripture have its whole effect and fulfilment upon you—"Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace."

But, again, the ignorance imputed to the woman of Samaria in the words "Hadst thou known the gift of God," does not lie merely in the ignorance of its being a gift, but in the ignorance of what the gift is. Before taking up the particular expression into which our Saviour has cast it, let me submit to your attention this undoubted truth, that eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, it does not occur to me that there is room to complain of ignorance, in as far as the bare and general information of this last mentioned passage is concerned. It is universally known, that eternal life is the great object which the Gospel proposes to obtain for all its followers. Men may not be aware that this eternal life is *a gift;* but this is a misconception which I have already attempted to dispose of. They are in general aware that whether viewed in the light of a gift or a claim, eternal life is the termination and inheritance of all who have an interest in the promises of the better covenant. They may not be so feelingly alive to the greatness of this subject as its importance demands. They may carry about with them a very faint and very feeble conception of it. It may be seldom present to their minds, and when it is present the impression of it may be too slender to overpower the domineering influence of the present scene and the present temptation. All this is very general; but as far as my observation goes, the positive ignorance of everlasting happiness in heaven being the final lot of every true Christian, is not general. Men know it, though they do not feel

it in sentiment, nor proceed upon it in action and in behaviour.

But, it may be said, if a man knows that "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"—is not this to know the sum and the substance of Christian Doctrine? Is not this a compendious expression, which embraces in its ample grasp all that is important? and after this is fairly fixed in the creed and understanding of a Christian, is there anything more in the way of teaching or explanation which remains to be done for him? This is a highly curious and a highly interesting question, and, if we had time for it, might lead to a lengthened discussion upon a very interesting subject. Let me remark, however, that it seems to be very much the tendency of speculative Christians to run up their religious faith into one sweeping principle, and into one short but ample proposition. This one thing, whatever it is, is made to stand upon the foreground of all their speculations. Whatever be the subject betwixt you, you are exposed to a never-varying recurrence to the favourite maxim. It is very true that there is a subordination in truth, and none so ignorant as not to know that one truth may embrace and carry another along with it. But what I have to complain of is, that this exclusive attention to the one reigning principle of their orthodoxy, instead of taking in the other truths, has the actual effect in their mind of keeping them out. Their wisdom, unlike that of the scribe who has treasured up things new and old, admits of no number, no variety in its objects. Instead of repairing to the law and the testimony, with the docility of children, ready to embrace them in all their variety, and in all their particulars, their great exercise is to subdue them all to their own systematic arrangement, and compel them to a forced subordination to their own riveted and antecedent principle. If this be not calling another man master, and acting upon an authority which is above Christ, and beyond Him, it is something very like it. I hope, before I am done, to make this a little clearer by pointing your attention to one most malignant example of it; but, in the mean time, does it not strike you, that in the whole of this proceeding there is a complexion of thought, and a train of speculations not to be found in the pure and original record—that the Christianity which exists in such a mind is not a fair transcript of the Christianity which exists in the New Testament; and I refer it to the conscience of all such, whether the act of mind by which they appropriate a doctrine and an article be a simple act of submission to the saying of Christ—be a casting down of their own lofty imaginations, and bringing every thought into the captivity of His obedience?

To take up the question then—if "Eternal life being the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," formed the whole of God's communication—if, instead of a Bible made up of various particulars, and containing in it things new and old, the whole of the divine message had been comprised in one short note or intimation, by which we were given to understand, that the prolongation of our lives to eternity was granted to us by God through the instrumentality of Christ Jesus—this information, general as it is, if thought enough by God to give, should have been thought enough by us to receive; and on the principle of not being wise above that which is written, it would have been our part thankfully to have acquiesced, and humbly to have restrained our curiosity within the limits assigned to it. But, in point of fact, God has not thought the information of this single sentence enough for us—He has given us more, and this more is expanded over the broad surface of a voluminous record. This is quite decisive. We should not be wise above that which is written, but we should be wise up to that which is written. We should follow God respectfully through all his revelations, and our faith in Him should be as varied and as particular as His communications to us. We should make ourselves acquainted with all Scripture—for all Scripture is said to be profitable; and if, instead of looking fairly into all its parts, and following it with cheerful submission through all its varieties, we fasten upon one principle, and then give ourselves up to our own speculations and our own analogies, instead

of acting the part of the teachable child, who takes his lesson as it is presented to him, we are making the wisdom of man carry it over the wisdom of heaven, and at the very time too, perhaps, that orthodoxy is our watch-word, and purity of doctrine is our boast and our rejoicing.

Now the effect of this observation should but send you to your Bibles, and my prayer to heaven is that these Bibles may become your daily delight and your daily exercise, so as to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. I cannot in the compass of one sermon give you a comprehensive view of the whole truth as it is in Jesus; but as to this eternal life which He has purchased for men, there are two capital points of information which I cannot keep back from you. The eternal life which He has purchased for men, you will observe that He has purchased for sinners, and the first capital point which He has secured for them is the pardon of their sins by the merit of His atoning sacrifice. I know that to this very hour the cross of Christ is a stumbling-block, and that with certain habits of speculation, the taste and the prejudice of many are in arms against it. They are willing to receive Christ in the general form of their Mediator—they will acquiesce in the doctrine so far, and feel no repugnance to eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; but the power of the peace-speaking blood they will not understand; and why, say they, will you step beyond the limits of this passage for the purpose of tacking so offensive an addition to it? For this best of reasons, I answer, that God has been pleased to go beyond the communication of this passage by tacking to it so many more passages which contain this addition. I call upon them to have a care, lest they be serving two masters, and thus be trying to make a compromise betwixt the word of God and their own fancy. I warn them, that to be Christians altogether, they must, if necessary, cut off a right hand or a right eye; and if there be any darling corruption of their own which opposeth itself to the doctrine of the cross, I appeal to their consciences, while I repeat to them the following passages with which I confront it:—"Justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."—"He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" and lastly, because we do not wish to detain you, and not because we have arrived at the end of the Scripture testimonies, "Christ hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." I offer no commentary—I confine myself to a simple exhibition of the Bible, and upon the strength of what has been exhibited, I call upon the avowed enemies of the atonement to cast down their lofty imagination.—I come back upon those professing Christians who look upon their own performances, and think they have done enough, and put it to their consciences now whether God thinks so. I ask them to look at that grand and mysterious movement which was made in heaven, when the eternal Son left the bosom of His Father, and a choir of heaven's host sung His advent to this lower world—and for what purpose? To magnify that law which you make so light of, and to make honourable that which you have disgraced and trampled upon. O let me put it to the consciences of those men who, satisfied with their own performances, look forward on the strength of them to a smooth transition through the valley of death, and an entrance of triumph into the land of immortality. If their performances be enough, what meaneth this mysterious sacrifice? Where the use and where the virtue of the atonement? To what end the agonies of that illustrious sufferer, on whose death the eye of prophecy throughout the whole of her magnificent career, from the first generation of the world down to the closing of the Old Testament, was ever pointed as the prominent object of her contemplations? Think you that all this was for no substantial object in the counsels of heaven? or that the decease

which was accomplished at Jerusalem, and of which the simple and touching memorials are so soon to be set evidently before you, carries with it no influence, and brings the accomplishment of no busy and important design along with it? Ah, my brethren, its meaning was to make an end of transgression; and that every one of you, whose life, in spite of all your security, has been one continued course of transgression, might, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, have the remembrance of them all washed away. Its meaning was to bring in an everlasting righteousness, that you, casting off all dependence on your own fancied attainments, might rest the whole of it upon an immovable foundation; and rest assured, that you will never enter with an unfaltering heart into the presence of God; you will never know what it is to have light and comfort in prayer; you will never taste the sweets of the spirit of adoption; you will never be delivered from all the darkening remainders of fear and of suspicion which still chase out from your bosom the light of the reconciled countenance and the joys of the Christian salvation; you will never, in the whole course of your earthly existence, have firm assurance toward God, or be able to talk with Him as one talketh with a friend, till that time cometh when you shall transfer your confidence from yourself to the Saviour who died for you; and brought into peace with God through Him who was offered the just for the unjust, you have His merits to plead with the Lawgiver, and His intercession to shield you from His righteous indignation.

I turn now to those professing Christians who look at their own performances, and are not satisfied with themselves, and call upon them to think of the mighty satisfaction that has been made for them by another. Let them point their eye to the blood of the atoning sacrifice, and in its peace-speaking power they will feel a consolation and a charm which no lame or feeble generality is ever able to impress. I ask them—why persist in this sullen despondency? why keep so intolerably by their fears? why is the charm of a beseeching God and of the mighty expedient that He has set up for the removal and utter extinction of the gulf between Him and His creatures—why is this so obstinately withstood by them? I have tried to cheer you out of this leaden and oppressive melancholy; I have tried to arouse you out of it; I have tried to win you out of it, and if possible to dissolve it by the language of smiling invitation. But I do more—I try to reproach you out of it. This is what the Bible does, and what a minister of the Bible is warranted in doing also. By refusing the comforts of the Christian faith, you make God a liar; you repudiate the testimony that He gives of His Son; you give Him no credit for the kindness that He is so largely and so liberally manifesting in behalf of all who will; you strip the great atonement of its power; you refuse to ascribe glory and honour to that redemption from which you take away all if you take the surenesses of its unfailing promises away from it; you return a cold and unwelcome look to all its invitations; and those words of which it is said that heaven and earth shall pass away ere they pass away, you suffer them to fall upon your ear, and to have as little effect upon you as if they were without truth and without significancy.

I have now come to our Saviour's own specific description of what the gift is. He calls it living water; and to make you understand what this living water is, we have nothing more to do than repeat that verse of John where our Saviour says, "If any man shall believe in me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water;" and it is added, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Now observe, my brethren, how I connect this second piece of information with the former. Are there some who yield a kind of general acquiescence in the New Testament, without any specific attention of the mind to the doctrine of the New Testament throughout all its verses? There are some who think they believe in the lump, but who prove that there is no reality in the belief by the act of shrinking from the details.

There are some of these general Christians to whom there is nothing unpalatable in the wide and summary announcement that eternal life is somehow or other obtained for us by the instrumentality of Christ Jesus as a mediator; but who feel all the revoltings of the natural enmity when you come to the separate items and the distinct parts of this mediatorship. I may not be speaking to the experience of a single tenth of the people now before me; but it is right for a minister to have his eye upon that whole field of humanity that he is called to cultivate; and I am quite sure that there exists a very numerous class of decent and lukewarm professors of the gospel, who, while they keep by the grand generality of the doctrine of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, still mix up along with it a kind of practical system for the attainment of eternal life, which keeps out of view and out of influence entirely any distinct or practical reference to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, or to the great atonement He has made for the sins of those who believe in Him. Now, the way to argue these people out of their meagre and superficial Christianity, is just to take the Bible and turn up its pages along with them—to tell them that all their general reverence for the book is nothing but a mockery and a semblance, if they do not open the book and run a simple and unwinking eye over all the matter that is contained in it—to arrest them at every particular passage by which the doctrine of the sacrifice, and of justification through faith in that sacrifice, is made known to us, and stopping the finger on each distinct clause of information, to challenge the belief just because the information is there.

The heaven which Christ purchased for sinners they never can enter until they are made meet for it. This is the second capital point of information which I proposed to come forward with. A sinner to get eternal life must obtain forgiveness through faith in the blood of the atoning sacrifice; and, again, a sinner to get eternal life must obtain purification and holiness through the operation of the Spirit, which is given to them that believe. There are professing Christians who acquiesce in the general doctrine of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and at the same time refuse the first point of information; and, in the same manner, there are professing Christians who acquiesce in the same general doctrine, and do not refuse the first point of information, but who refuse the second. They deny the necessity of personal holiness, and feel not merely a cold indifference, but feel a positive dislike to this undoubted truth, that whom God justifieth, them He also sanctifieth. This repugnance to the sound teaching which is according to godliness, breaks out into a thousand displays. It appears in the life. It may be seen in that act of mind by which many a deceiver has been known to couple with the doctrine of Christ's sufficiency, a feeling of security in the commission of sin. Ministers have felt it to their own mortifying experience, when, at the very time that they were standing at the death bed of a parishioner, and prayer fell like music upon the ear of the dying man, they have detected him in the utterance of falsehood, and have made the galling discovery that theft was practised in his family with his knowledge and his approbation. To add to the mischievous and unmanageable inveteracy of the error, it has assumed all the shape and appearance of a system—it has put on the semblance of orthodoxy—a set of quirks and distinctions have been made to supersede the broad, urgent, and impressive simplicity of apostolical truth. A teacher cannot come forward with the good works which Paul willed that he should affirm constantly, but there are hearers now-a-day who, instead of listening to take it in, throw themselves into a defensive attitude for the purpose of warding it off. To conciliate such hearers he must offer a thousand apologies—he must fill up his half-hour with scholastic explanations—practice and duty must be elbowed out altogether, or degraded into perfect insignificance by the narrowness of the corner which they are thrust into; and that precious time is spent in nibbling away at the point and pedantry of artificial divisions, which would have been better employed in alarming the conscience, and urging the

broad and impressive warning of the Apostle, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." No, my brethren, all these things must be done away. They were done away in the case of the Christians to whom the apostle addressed himself; and in what manner? "They were washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The same principle applies to the second point of information which I brought to bear upon the first. You have no right to attach yourself to one truth to the exclusion of another. You have no right first to derive one principle from the Bible, and then to derive a second from it by dint of your own excogitations. You are to take the second principle as well as the first from the Bible—you are to follow the Bible with respectful footstep through all its details and all its additional communications; and when I offer such obvious passages as the following, I call upon you to be convinced, and to acknowledge them;—"There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."—"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." If the Bible will not convince, little can be done by a mere human interpreter; and nothing remains but to deplore the delusion which I cannot rectify—to pity and to pray for it.

The very expedient by which I attempted to school the general Christian into a distinct and pointed recognition of the atonement, I employ for the purpose of schooling the partial Christian into a recognition equally distinct and equally pointed of the doctrine of the Spirit. It all resolves itself into a belief of the law and of the testimony, and not such a belief as will rest in the bare acquiescence that the testimony is true, but such a belief as will urge on its possessor to an actual examination of the testimony—such a belief as will close with all the parts of the testimony—such a belief as will appropriate every distinct communication as it passes in review before the eye of a mind earnestly bent on becoming wise unto salvation through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament—such a belief as a little child exercises when it follows by its convictions all the separate parts of the narrative which its parent sets before it. The belief follows, not because this second thing that is told me blends in one harmonious analogy with the first thing that was told me, but the belief embraces both the things, just because both the things are told me in the written and venerable record.

Take this along with you, my brethren, and you will perceive at once how the doctrine of free grace is delivered in the Bible—how the doctrine of heaven being a gift, and pardon being a gift, and all the privileges of Christianity being so many gifts—you will perceive at once how these statements may be defended on the one hand from the abuses of a corrupting Antinomianism, and how on the other they may be defended from the reproaches of those who say of the evangelical doctrine, that it gives up all the securities of practical righteousness. There is not one of these doctrines which does not rest for all its credibility and all its title to acceptance on the announcement of God. And should God be pleased to add to them another announcement, it takes its station among the former with all the firm footing of an equal and a co-ordinate authority. The living water is a gift, and it is a never-failing accompaniment of all the other gifts; and if it be wanting, then every one of them is wanting. Without holiness no man shall see God. Without the Spirit, we are none of Christ's. The Spirit is called the earnest of our inheritance; and if we obtain not the earnest on this side of time, we shall not obtain the inheritance on the other side of time. Ah, my brethren, be assured that He who opens the portal of the mind for a welcome admission of the tidings of pardon and acceptance, does not close it upon the truth which ever follows in their train, that we shall never reach heaven unless by sanctification we are made meet for heaven. This is borne in, as

it were, upon a Christian mind with as resistless an energy and stamped upon it with as indelible an impression, and proceeded on with as firm and habitual a conviction of its truth, as any other communication of God's word that you choose to condescend upon. That truth, the faith of which gives me peace and joy, is just believed as far and no farther than that truth, the faith of which impresses upon me the necessity of a new walk and an upright conversation, and which sets me on the track of endeavour and inquiry how to obtain them, and which guides me to the affecting conclusion that without Christ I can do nothing, and which revives my departing courage by the assurance that with Christ I can do all things and which urges me on to renew my prayers at the throne of grace, and which leads me to use the strength I acquire through prayer by putting it to trial and which joins in one close and inseparable combination, the habit of exertion with the habit of dependence, and which at length establishes me in the very attitude of the Apostle, who strove mightily, according to the grace of God working in him mightily.

I come back upon the class of professing Christians who look at their own performances, and think they do enough. I ask them if in the obedience they yield they look habitually to that mighty Agent who has been sent forth from heaven as the Restorer and Sanctifier of a degenerate world? Do they act on the strength of the promised assistance? Do they watch for the Spirit with all perseverance? Paul did so; and he, so far from thinking that he had already attained, or was already perfect, forgot the things which were behind, and reached forth unto those things which were before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I come back upon the class of professing Christians who look to themselves and are not satisfied. It is right for them not to be satisfied with their performances; but it is not right in the face of a promise sealed by the blood of Christ—in the face of a settled provision announced to you as forming part of His redemption—it is not right, I say, in the face of such encouragements to despair. The provision to which I allude is the Spirit to help your infirmities. It is not refused to those who ask it. It will be given you by Him who hath given you His own Son as the pledge and the assurance that with Him He will freely give you all things. "It is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." I announce it as a gift, and in so doing I strip a pretended orthodoxy of all its plans of resistance to that doctrine which is according to godliness; I explain this godliness in all its parts; I preserve this sanctification in all its branches; I descend to all the minuteness and variety of the apostolical teaching; I carry forward Christianity to the shop and the family and the market; I apply it to your hearts and your homes and your business. This may, to the taste of some, give too secular and too working an air to the divine life. For their satisfaction I am not furnished with two mouths—I cannot say two things at the same instant—I cannot, within the compass of one breathing, tell both the duty and the source from which you desire the ability to thus change it. Yet both must be told, and if they stand in different verses or even in different chapters of the same Bible, should not you judge with candour and hear with indulgence, though they are made to stand in different paragraphs of the same sermon, or different sermons of the same minister?

This brings me to another part of my text. I have been hitherto employed in attempting to prove that the privilege annexed to Christianity is a gift, and in explaining what the gift is, I hasten to a close, and offer little in the way of expansion upon a clause so obvious in itself as—"Hadst thou known who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee." It is delightful to think that these gracious words which fell from the mouth of our Saviour, and contain an assurance so pregnant with satisfaction and hope to all who believe in Him, have an emphasis in themselves which need no human illustration to help them. It is delightful to think that this knowledge which the woman of Samaria was in want of

is open and accessible to all of you. I shall convey to you that knowledge in a single sentence—Christ is willing and He is able to help you. To Him all power has been committed both in heaven and in earth. Without Him, you can do nothing; but with Him you have a Being who, subduing all the powers of darkness which oppose you in this lower world, and commanding all the influences of heaven to rest upon you, can enable you to do all things. Had she known, she would have asked—or, in other words, we do not ask because we do not know. With what a charm and what an emphasis ought this to fall upon the heart of the melancholy Christian. He is here told, upon the highest of all authorities—upon the authority of our Saviour Himself—that the despair in which he indulges is founded upon ignorance of Him. He knows not how ready—he knows not how able—he knows not how free—he knows not how perfectly willing—nay, how eager and how delighted his Saviour is to receive all who come unto Him—to listen to their complaints—to heal their diseases—to supply their every want, and administer to every necessity. This is the true and the faithful representation of Christ. Could I give you a real and a living impression of Him—could I fix in your hearts the image of Him such as He is—could I bring Him before you, offering and inviting, nay, beseeching you to be reconciled—could all this be done—(and I pray that this work of faith may be wrought in you with power)—then the melancholy which oppresses your heart and keeps it dark would be dissolved in an instant—the gospel would come to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance—and the object for which Paul laboured with the Galatians would be accomplished in you. Christ would be formed in you, and He would be made unto you of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Before concluding, let me give you an explanation of the term living water, in the largest and most comprehensive sense which belongs to it. There can be nothing more firmly depended on than interpretation of Holy Writ upon the subject—and there we are expressly told that it signifies the Spirit of God given to all them who believe. Now, by the way in which I have split down the subject into particulars, you may conceive that this Spirit is not given at the very outset of a man's Christianity—that on the strength of his own understanding, and by the movements of his own conscience, he travels in independent progress toward the point at which the Holy Ghost is ready to enter him—that there must be a previous conviction of sin, and a previous knowledge of the Saviour, and a previous faith in Him, and that then upon men in this state of preparation the living water is poured, and holiness unto everlasting life is the blessed effect of its salutary application. Now it is not to be denied that at distinct steps of the career of a believer there are distinct supplies of grace and of spiritual enlargement conferred upon him—that he stands on higher vantage ground for obtaining what he seeks when he can do it with a strong faith in the appointed Mediator—and that when this faith is at the strongest, the Holy Ghost is ready to meet it with His largest and most powerful operation. But, my brethren, you are not to suppose that this answer of His to the believer's prayer is the very commencement of His influences upon the soul. The truth is that He presides over the whole progress of sentiment and conviction by which the mind is possessed by the principle of faith, and the mouth is conducted to the prayer of faith. He convinces of sin—He communicates knowledge through the medium of the Bible. He gives movement and direction to the very first step in the process of conversion, as well as to all the successive steps of the process. He was present with his constraining energy at the time when conscience laid its check upon the sinner—at the time when his heart smote him for his misdoings—at the time when a serious conviction of the need of repentance visited the inner chamber of his thoughts—at the time when a sense of guilt and of danger began to urge upon him the necessity of flying from the frowning destiny that was before him—at the time when an

ticipation filled his bosom with her darkest and most appalling images—at the time when the voice within would not let him alone, and the terror of the Lord, like an arrow sticking fast, kept by him throughout all his movements, and pursued him with an agonizing sense of a present guilt and of a coming danger—at the time when his Saviour's name fell upon his ear and arrested his attention, and he turned his languid eye upon some obscure dawning of the Sun of righteousness—at the time when the clouds passed away and the soul emerged from all its perplexities, and the free offer of acceptance came with assurance upon his feelings, and the persuading power and kindness of the Saviour charmed the darkness and the tempest away from him, and behold it was a calm—at the time when the firm determination entered his bosom to live to Him who thus had translated him from death to life, and the holy purpose was carried forward to accomplishment and the prayer for a larger supply of the Spirit of all grace ascended on the wings of an invigorated faith, and brought down upon his tranquilized heart an abundant shower of the influences of heaven.

SERMON XI.

*The Duty Required and the Strength Imparted.**

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 13.

IN the prosecution of the following discourse, I shall first point your attention to the extent of duty, or to the multitude of particulars which enter into the "all things" of the apostle. In the second place, I shall prove to you in how many of these things we offend. And in the third place, I shall attempt to rouse you from the dangerous conclusion, that because this disobedience is so much the condition of frail and corrupt humanity, it must just be acquiesced in—a conclusion which I must do my uttermost to resist, because I see in the example before me that there is a revealed instrument for aiding the frailties and subduing the corruptions of our nature—even the strength imparted by Christ—an instrument so powerful, that in virtue of its operation Paul was enabled to do all things—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

I. Duty, though simple in its principles, is manifold in its applications. There is not one thing which it is the duty of man to do, that could not be traced to a clear and immediate dependence upon the first and the greatest commandment—the love of God; and the second, which is the love of our neighbour, takes in a very wide range of human obedience.

Each distinct application of the law may be called a distinct duty, and there are writers who have bewildered us among the divisions and the subdivisions of human virtue. They have laid hold of the general principle, and made it to travel the extensive round of society along with them. They have applied it to a multitude of cases, and brought forth a lengthened catalogue of observances for the regulation of human life. Now, it is very true that to a certain extent our Lord and His apostles did the same thing. They did not satisfy themselves with announcing the general principles of duty—they have in many instances given us the case and the application; but they have by no means exhausted this part of the subject. They have left a thousand possibilities in the circumstances of man unnoticed, and the only way in which they have provided for them is by bequeathing the general rule, and leaving

* This sermon was preached at Dairsie Sacrament on June 13, 1813. At Kilmany Sacrament, June 20, 1813. At Balmerino, August 2, 1813. At Monimail, September 19, 1813. At Cupar, June 4, 1815. At Kirkintulloch, August 7, 1815. In the Tron Church, Glasgow, June 9, 1816.

it to man himself to make the applications. Love, says Paul is the fulfilling of the law. He had before enumerated a few of the applications. Under the influence of this principle, a man will not commit adultery—he will not kill, he will not steal, he will not bear false witness he will not covet; but, fully aware that he had not exhausted all the applications he ended his enumeration, satisfied with leaving his disciples in full possession of the general principle, by declaring that if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It must be obvious to you, that were I to attempt an enumeration of the "all things" which belong to obedience, it would be long, and very long, before I could accomplish it. Love to God involves in it obedience to all His requirements. Love to man is only one of those requirements, and yet it involves in its mighty train the doing of all that is just or useful to our brethren of the species. The duties which spring from these copious principles of human conduct are like the host which no man can number. They meet us at every footstep of our history—they press upon us in every direction—they accompany us in every relation of life—they demand every fragment of our time—they move along the whole line of our existence. Nor is there a single minute in which they leave the heart of man to the arbitrary independence of its movements—"Whatsoever you do, do to the glory of God," is a commandment which there is no escaping from. It does not leave us to ourselves for a single instant. It tells us that there is no conceivable situation in human life in which God has not a law and a duty for us—nor a single case in all the wide diversity of human affairs to which this question is not applicable, "What is the will of God in the matter before me?"

You may be well convinced, then, of the multitude of the "all things" which it is your duty to do, though I do not bring forward a catalogue of all the varieties. Let the love of God be the constant principle, and obedience to God the constant expression of it, and there cannot a day roll over your heads without carrying a number of virtuous performances along with it. There must be a constant surrender of self to the interests of those around you—there must be a breathing after usefulness—there must be integrity for the performance of what is just—there must be civility for the performance of what is agreeable—there must be an hourly self-denial in the work of doing to others what you would be done by; and such is the wideness of this obligation, that a single human being can scarcely come within your reach but you must feel a call to the exercise. For the master to do that which is just and equal to his servant; for the servant to be faithful to his work while the eye of his employer is removed from him; for the parent to maintain a constant purity of example in the sight of his children; for the member of a company to carry it with kindness and humility, and to give up his own will and his own way to the gratification of those around him; and what, perhaps, is a higher achievement than any, for the member of a family to keep down the irksomeness of his feeling, and suffer not a murmur or a frown to break in upon the peacefulness of his domestic society: these are only a few out of the many; and yet they demand a vigilance which must never be remitted; a tone and a habit of exertion which must never be relaxed; a strictness of principle which, if suffered to abate for a single instant, may throw you open to the inroads of temptation, and lead you to deplore in sorrow and in shame the impotency of all your purposes.

From the visible conduct let me carry you inward to the chambers of the mind, and lay before you the mighty work of obedience that should be going on there. Are the supreme regards of your heart fastened upon God? Is His authority felt as the master principle to which all the movements of the inner man observe a subordination? Do you feel His friendship to be enough for you? and does His assurance that all shall work together for good, keep your spirit at rest from the anxieties of the world? He has sent you a written message, have you brought every thought of your heart to the captivity of its obedience? Do you submit to it

in faith, and is the love of Christ, the author and the finisher of our faith, felt in its constraining influence upon you? Is conformity to His image the main object of your ambition? and in devotion to the Father—in love to every brother of the species—in the patient endurance of wrongs—in meekness and gentleness and kindness, are you aiming at a fair and faithful resemblance to the pattern laid before you in the gospel, struggling not only to walk as He walked, but to have the same mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus?

II. These are so many of the "all things;" and I have put them into the form of questions that your conscience, stimulated to an answer, may go along with me in the second head of discourse; and sure I am, that every honest and enlightened conscience will spare me the burden of a proof when I assert, that in many, and in very many, of these things we offend. In some of these things, indeed, there may be an outward conformity, though the great principle of duty—the will of God—has no influence whatever. A sense of honour may give integrity to your conduct; the fear of disgrace may preserve you from all that is counted shameful in society; an instinctive feeling of generosity may lead you to occasional acts of beneficence; the mechanical influence of habit may perpetuate and ensure your attendance upon the ordinances of religion; your admiration of what is tasteful and decorous in the human character, may lead you to display in your own much of all that is amiable and engaging; but all this might have been done though there had been neither a God above you nor an eternity before you; and certain it is, that all this has been done where there was no feeling of the one and no anticipation of the other. How can these be appealed to as proofs of obedience, when one and all of them may be performed while the grand principle of obedience is asleep; while the authority of the Judge is unfelt, and the fear of the judgment seat has no operation? Viewed in reference to the Lawgiver, they are in fact so many acts of indifference; nor can they be sustained as offerings to Him, when in the doing of them He was never thought of, and the obligation of His law was never adverted to. Yet, upon this deceitful foundation, many an infatuated soul rests its security; and many who pass in society as its delight and its ornament, who are hailed as the favourites of every company, and distinguished by the greetings of the market-place—who, by the unblemished propriety of their manners, have their rank assigned to them among the good men of the world, will, in that day when judgment is laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, be found to have lived without God, and having neglected His obedience in time, to have lost His favour and His friendship through eternity.

"Whosoever," says the Apostle James, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." There is nothing to surprise or to startle us in this assertion, if we only advert to the singleness of that principle on which all obedience is suspended—Respect to the authority of God. It is no evidence of respect whatever, if you just do what you would have done though He had interposed with no authority upon the subject. He hath said, "Thou shalt not kill;" but if your own instinctive horror at the atrocity of a murder would have preserved you from the breaking of this commandment, I cannot say that in this one example of outward conformity, I have yet detected the essential principles of obedience.

He hath said, "Thou shalt not be angry at thy brother without a cause;" but if the constitutional mildness of your own temper keep you from this transgression, I have not yet seen any decisive proof of respect to the authority of the Lawgiver. He hath said, "Thou shalt not steal;" but if a sentiment of honour aided by the sufficiency of your own circumstances, keep you from an offence so mean and so disgraceful, for anything I know, the heart, in reference to God, may still be in a state of the most entire wickedness, and as utterly devoid of submission to Him as if He did not exist, or as if His will had never been proclaimed to us. I travel the whole round of human duty, and I may see a thousand examples of out-

ward conformity which are decisive of nothing, because to do what you would have done at any rate, can never be put to the account of religious principle. Give me a case where the thing commanded is at war with the mighty elements of taste and passion and interest, and then I will fasten my attention upon it. The experiment will be a fair one; and if I find that in every instance the authority of God carries it over the rebellious inclinations of the heart, then I will be found to acknowledge that the first and the greatest commandment is kept in all its extent and in all its entireness. But who does not see even in one single instance to the contrary, that the great principle of obedience is trampled upon, God is deposed from His supremacy, something else has been more loved than He, and the homage which He exacts, not of a part of the heart but of all the heart, has been withheld from Him? Many things may be appealed to; but if all things are not done, then the Lawgiver is dethroned; and as surely as one act of forgery or murder brings down the vengeance of the civil law upon the man who was blameless and unoffending to the very moment of his transgression, so surely will many whom the world smiles upon, and who pass among the men of the world as the most pure and amiable of the species, when brought under the tribunal of that mighty Being "with whom we have to do," have those points laid open which will flash upon their consciences the conviction of guilt, and entail upon their deluded souls an entire and everlasting condemnation.

Give me a man under the influence of an honest desire after conformity to the love of God, and there will be no wilful reservations in the obedience of such a man. There may be imperfection in the whole of his obedience, but this imperfection does not proceed from any deliberate exception of this one or that other of the divine commandments. There is within him the working of an entire principle—in virtue of which he is in good earnest after the doing of all the commandments. He may come short in all and in every one of them, but in none of these shortcomings has he committed that in which, according to the Apostle John, is the sin unto death. He honestly grieves at his shortcomings—he honestly confesses them, and obtains an interest in that justice and faithfulness of God which stands pledged to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all his unrighteousness. But there is not one particular of this unrighteousness which he does not most sincerely desire to obtain deliverance from, which he does not strive with all his power to make head against, which he does not feel a longing of the heart, that through Christ strengthening him he may prevail against, which he does not make the object of his watchfulness and his exertions and his prayers; and be assured that there is not an honest and aspiring Christian among you who will not, in virtue of his general desire to be released from all sin, and to shake himself loose from the service of every other master but Christ, and to do all things in His name, and to the glory of His father who is in heaven—there is not one of you who will not by the use of the gospel expedients of faith and dependence on the Spirit make constant progress not merely in one or in any given number of reformations, but constant progress in all reformation, and be perpetually tending to the high eminency of standing perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

Now let me just suppose that instead of this general and honest desire after all obedience there is one single exception in which the man gives wilful and deliberate way to his own passion or his own interest or his own vanity, and that with the striving after these other points of conformity there is one point in which he acts the part of a determined and presumptuous offender. Even he who honestly aspired after obedience in all points fell into sin; but as I said just now, such sin as was perpetually decaying in its power and ascendency over him—such sin as found its forgiveness in the blood of Christ through prayer—such sin as might occasionally break forth into that warfare between the flesh and the spirit which takes place in the bosom of every believer—but such sin as is ever waning away into a feeble

and more expiring remainder, and which at length, utterly extinguished, will present the man who has fought this good fight, and has kept the faith, and has finished his course—will present him holy and unblamable and unreprovable before God. But this, my brethren, will never, never be the result in the case of him who, with the consent of his will, makes one habitual exception to the great maxim of entire and universal obedience. The flaw which corrupt nature introduces into the obedience of the man who is making head against all corruption is one thing—the flaw in the obedience of him who wilfully gives way to any one form of corruption is another. The former flaw is ever getting fainter, and will at length disappear—the latter flaw carries in it all the virulence, and brings down upon it all the condemnation of the sin unto death. What is the reason why a sinner of the latter description yields an obedience in other things, and refuses his obedience in this one thing? The doing of the other things falls in with his taste and constitution and circumstances. It lays him under no heavy or painful sacrifice. He may be constitutionally of a gentle and peaceful disposition, and he transgresses not the precept of not being soon angry. He may have a positive aversion to the use of intoxicating liquors, and you may never be able to detect him in the transgression of the precept—"Be not drunk with the drunken." He may have a high sentiment of natural integrity hidden within him, and in turning defiance to every one temptation of dishonesty he may yield a conformity to the maxim of doing as he would be done by. But give me one case, and I will ask no more, where the authority of God comes into collision with a something that his heart is set upon—a something to which he is driven with the whole violence of his desires—a something which he knows to be against the will of God; when in the face of that knowledge he acts the wilful and deliberate transgressor, then, I say, that all his other obedience is no such proof of his regard to the authority of God as his disobedience in this one thing is a proof of his utter disregard to that authority—I say that this disobedience demonstrates that there is festering within him a great and a radical principle of rebellion against the authority of his rightful Lawgiver—that the visible conformities, though most correctly and punctually done, are not done unto God; they are done from some other cause than the right principle of submission to Him, because when this principle was brought to its fair trial—when called out to combat it with the urgency of a besetting temptation, it was found wanting; and being an habitual offender in this one point, he is guilty of all, because he evinces within him such a preference of his own desire to God's will, as gives all its provocation to sin, all its deformity to disobedience.

To think otherwise, my brethren, would be doing less justice to God than you do to an earthly legislator. Those unhappy men who lie under sentence of death have become amenable to that sentence upon one specific act of disobedience to the laws of their country.* They have not been guilty of murder, and it is to be hoped that they had still enough of instinctive horror at such an atrocity as to have recoiled from this deed of violence. They have not been guilty of forgery, and I know not whether it was the want of opportunity, or the fear of detection, or some remainder of dislike to such an outrageous violation of truth, that kept them from this transgression. The one crime of which they have been guilty is theft, and for this one crime they are liable to as fearful an execution as if there lay upon them the guilt of innumerable violations. This one crime is completely decisive of the general defect in the moral constitution that belongs to them—it is completely decisive of their wanting the principle of allegiance to the civil authority. Had this principle been within them, they would not have stolen, and the single act of stealing demonstrates their utter want of this principle. And in the same manner with the principle of allegiance to the authority of God within

* This paragraph, and the two immediately succeeding ones, were added to the original sermon written in Kilmany, when it was preached in Glasgow. At the time of its delivery in the Tron Church, two men were lying under sentence of death for theft.

you this principle would struggle against all that was contrary to the will of God. It might be long, and very long, before it carried you the length of a sinless conformity to the whole of His commandments, but sure I am that not one of the commandments would be wilfully and habitually trampled upon; and give me a man who has set up the fear of God in his heart, and I shall see that man walking the whole round of visible obedience, contesting it against sin in all its forms and in all its modes, and struggling, honestly struggling, to yield himself to every one of the requirements, and to conform himself to the whole will of God.

I trust that what I have said may serve to undeceive the consciences of those who are building the hope of a future security on a partial obedience—who are cherishing some allowed reservation—who are prosecuting some unhallowed walk of indulgence which they have not yet had the fortitude to abandon—who think that they will eke out for themselves a place in heaven, because along with some suffered habit of licentiousness they have integrity, or they have good-nature, or they have a feeling heart, or they do an occasional act of generosity, or they are attentive to parents, or they take a share in the ordinances of religion. This is one very important application of the above principle; but there is one other which I cannot forbear, as it touches on a subject to which I from time to time have occasionally referred, and which if ever I take it up in a separate and systematic form will, I am sure, require the deliberate exertion of a good many weeks ere I unfold it in all its bearings, or do justice to the vast importance which belongs to it. If these principles be true, how fearful is the extent of destruction that is brought upon the human race by the rude, careless, unfeeling and unreflecting way in which the young of a great city are introduced into the vices of dissipation! They may only be initiated into one act of disobedience, and along with this they may retain youthful sincerity, youthful tenderness of heart, all the impulses of a youthful generosity, and all the repugnance of a high and honourable indignation at what is sordid and avaricious, or mean and paltry in the concealments of dishonesty. And yet, my brethren, be this as it may, they by their one act of disobedience have thrown the gauntlet of defiance to the authority of God—they have entered on that course which goeth down to the chambers of death. They have dispossessed from their hearts the principle of allegiance to the Lawgiver who speaketh to them from heaven; they do that for the sake of which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; they have indeed made a woeful transition, and yet, wretched to think, it is a transition made by thousands every year—it is a transition which parents sleep over—a transition which is connived at and smiled upon by general society—a transition to which the helpless young are cheered and encouraged by their hardier and more profligate acquaintances—a transition travelled by so fearful a majority of human souls, that a Christian parent shudders as much at the thought of committing his children to the walks of business as he would do at committing them to all the dangers of a fearful and unknown wilderness. Oh, my brethren, this is an extremely painful contemplation, and I should like to be relieved from it—and the way of rearing around me a spectacle on which the moral eye might rest with more complacency than it ever can do on this dark scene of ruined principle that is on every side of me, would be for parents to stir themselves to a little more vigilance than they have ever yet exercised, and for the masters of populous establishments to take upon themselves some responsibility in the way of advice and of guardianship, and for private individuals among you to betake yourselves to the angelic office of doing all that in you lies to aid the struggles of human virtue when like to be overborne by the tide of ridicule and of example, and for all of you who have a desire for reformation to cherish a more intrepid and declared spirit upon the subject than you have ever yet done, so as to make determined head against the tyranny of custom, and to keep yourselves and others out of the way of every temptation, and to shun every assembly of the light and the scornful, and man-

fully to resist all that is corrupting in the conformities of fashion and of the world, and to take your own independent way, and spread the sanction of your example over others who do the same when you break off from every combination, and refuse every meeting, and retire from every society, where, in the spirit of a wild and convivial licentiousness, all the decencies of life are exploded, and all the delicacies of a yet unvitiated youth are subjected to a most barbarous and unfeeling violation.

This is but a rapid sketch of that work of extensive mischief that week after week is gaining proselytes to the kingdom of Satan, and making them tenfold more the children of hell than before. At present I shall prosecute it no further, and shall conclude with one sentence to a class of hearers over whom I could pour all the tenderness of a mind that would do anything to perpetuate the bloom of their innocence here and preserve them entire for the pure joys of a happy eternity hereafter. Are you hesitating under the influence of vicious and corrupting exposure?—Then know that the question is not, Shall I do this wicked thing, and retaining all the other virtues of my character, just put myself in a less likely situation for heaven than before? Understand the principle I have been labouring to impress about the whole magnitude of the ruin that a deliberate habit of transgression against one point and particular of the divine law brings along with it; and then you will perceive that the question will be, Shall I do this wicked thing, and put the whole happiness of my eternity away from me? Feel the whole interest of your imperishable being to be involved in the step on which you are hesitating. Bring the whole extent of your religious principles to bear upon the question, and know, most assuredly know, that however much the vices of dissipation may be tolerated and connived at by society at large, it is true of every one of these vices, as it is true of every other, that a wilful indulgence is a gulf between you and God, and a barrier in the way of your salvation. May every call you have heard to immediate repentance lend its impression to your hearts. Think of the progressive tyranny of habit; think of the progressive hardening of the mind against all moral and religious considerations; think that the voice of conscience decays and at last dies out into a final departure away from you; think of the spirit of God grieved by your every act of resistance; and do, my young friends, choose the better part, and let every manly principle of high and honourable resolution be summoned up to the exercise; and when sinners entice, consent not, and defy all their ridicule, and spurn all their allurements, and be alarmed not merely at vice, but at every one step which facilitates and prepares for it; and be assured that the more singular you make yourself, the more formidable the combination of censure and contempt you raise up against you—and the more unsupported by the example and countenance of others, if it be in the good cause of obedience, you throw a higher moral sublimity over the whole of your intrepid and respectable career; and the noble consistency of your doings will in time win from every acquaintance you have the fulness of admiration, and you may at length become the honoured instrument in the hand of God of breaking up the combinations of iniquity, and throwing the shield of a commanding example over the young who may come after you in your warehouses and in your offices of employment.

To "do all things" is the only effectual test of obedience. I go round with this test among the various classes and characters of men, and I see a woeful deficiency on every side of me. I first go to them to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and who, resting on the humble standard of their own virtues, put away from them the offered atonement of the gospel. Hard but important task to bring these people under the humbling conviction of sin, and through the flimsy disguise of mere civil accomplishment, to give them a view of the heart in all its wickedness and deformity! I would say that it consisted in a total alienation of the heart from God. They, indeed, who are far off from God, are made nigh only by the blood of Christ; and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that

those who despise its cleansing and its peace-speaking power should put God so far, and so very far away from them. He is not in all their thoughts; and when they bring their deceitful assemblage of virtues before me, I ask of their love to Him, without whom virtue is nothing better than the fiction of a name. I ask them if His authority be deeply felt and faithfully proceeded upon—if His ordinances be their delight and if His Bible be their directory—if His approbation be enough for them, when the approbation of men is withdrawn; and without pressing them too hard upon the truth of their pretensions that they do justly and love mercy, I leave it to their consciences to tell, whether they walk humbly with their God?

I go to another set, to whom the preaching of the cross is not foolishness; who name the name of the Saviour and love His sacraments; whose thoughts are more upon God, and whose eye and whose prayers are often lifted to the place where His honour dwelleth. To them I apply the test of "doing all things;" and I count it the most grievous offense which the honour of Christianity has to sustain, that some of its ostentatious disciples confine their piety to the Sabbath and to the ordinances, and banish God from the week-day employment of ordinary business. Whence that disgusting censoriousness which spreads the tincture of gall over so many a religious conversation? Whence that low tone of honesty and truth, which among the humbler ranks of society is so often found to accompany the uniform appearance, and I believe too the occasional reality, of zeal in matters of religion? Whence, in fact, that separation of religious from social duty we so often meet with, not merely in their conception, but in their example and practice? Whence the feeling, that when a minister lectures you upon fidelity to masters, upon civility and good neighbourhood to those around you, upon the payment of your debts, upon the making up of your differences, upon the thousand duties which meet you every hour, and urge you at every step in the progress of your history, to something agreeable to the will of God and the example of the Saviour—whence, I say, the feeling which exists among you that all this is very odd and very unsuitable to the pulpit, and particularly so at a time when every heart should be turned to the love of Christ, and every eye should be melting over the appointed memorial of His atonement? Alas! against them, too, we can prefer the charge of not "doing all things," and we can substantiate it. With the mark of godliness upon their forehead, their conduct for the great majority of their time says, "We will not have God to rule over us." He is only their occasional God. The easy offering of their prayers in the family, or of their attendance in the church and at the table, is ever in readiness. But the living sacrifice of the whole body, soul, and spirit, is withheld from Him. He is deposed from his right and sovereignty over every minute of their existence; and instead of His law reaching to all their concerns, and bringing the whole man under his obedience, we see that in the vast majority of their doings they cast Him off, and are as much the slaves of their own temper, and inclination, and interest, as if God had not a will for them at all times to obey, and as if Christ had never set an example before them to study and to imitate.

Hold, ye hypocrites! who talk of this as the season that is given to the love of Christ, and to the memorial of His atonement! Did not Christ order away a disciple from His altar?—and upon what errand? Upon what you, it seems, would call the very worldly and very unsuitable employment of making up a quarrel with a neighbour. Did not Christ say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments?" and yet the minister who expounds these commandments, and presses their observance upon you, is looked upon as preaching another gospel than what He left behind Him. Oh! when will men cease to put asunder what God hath joined; and, taking their lesson from the Bible as little children, submit to it without a murmur in all its parts and in all its varieties?

But let the minister of God be gentle with all men, and humble under the feeling of his own infirmities. Let him, however zealous for the truth as it is in Jesus, learn that there is nothing in the

purity of his own practice to justify a tone of indignant superiority to others. It is easy to see and to approve that which is excellent; but how shall he compass the doing of it? It is easy to expatiate on the frailties and the delusions of men; but how shall he manage for himself, when told by his own melancholy experience that he shares in them? It is easy to acknowledge the right and the sovereignty of God in all things, and to press his earnest assurances upon you, that you are wrong, if you suffer not the word of exhortation urging you to the daily walk and duties of the Christian; but to what refuge can he fly, when he finds that he himself is a defaulter, and that after having warmed his heart at the inconsistency of others, and penned his sentences against it, he mingles in the business of his work and his family, and forgetting that the eye of his God follows him there, falls a helpless victim to the imbecilities of our ruined nature?

I make it a common question with you, my brethren, "What shall we do to be saved from this sore calamity?" Did not Christ come to do something more than blot out the sentence of sin from the book of judgment? Did not He come to extirpate the influence of sin from the believer's heart? And unless we make war against it in every quarter and aspire to a conformity with the will of God in all things, how, in the name of truth and of Scripture, can the salvation of Christ be taking effect upon us?

III. This leads me to the third head of discourse—Sin is not to be acquiesced in. You are not to say, "Corruption is so much the lot of humanity, that we must just be doing with it." This, I fear, is often said in the heart, and often proceeded upon in the conduct. Every new sin as it is contracted is regularly laid over upon Christ. It perhaps furnishes a new topic of humility; but then another opportunity comes round, and the sin is again indulged in without a struggle. The answer which Paul gave to the question, "Shall we sin then that grace may abound?" was a prompt and decisive one—"God forbid!" But the answer which these people give in practice is, that it is all very fair. The use which they make of Christ's redemption is to make Him the minister of sin; and wilful transgression on the one hand, with some unmeaning parade of repentance on the other, makes up the wretched history of many a deluded man, whose obedience is nothing more than a round of positive observances, and whose orthodoxy is nothing more than a speculation and a name.

Oh! when shall we make you understand, my brethren, that the salvation of the gospel is salvation from the power of sin as well as from its punishment; and that the grace of God which bringeth that salvation, not only carries in it forgiveness to all the ungodliness and worldly lusts we have been guilty of in time past, but teaches us to deny them in time future, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world? Do not confine the mercy of God to the mere exercise of forgiveness; acknowledge and go along with it in all its varied exercises. And we read that the very way in which that mercy hath saved us, is by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. You may rest assured that unless the fruit of the Holy Ghost be seen in the newness of your lives, and unless the deeds of the old man, being done away, shall give place to the regenerate and the new creature in Christ Jesus, you have no part nor lot in the matter—you, as yet, form no part of God's workmanship or God's husbandry—you have none of that union with Christ which the fruitful branch has with the vine—you may name the name of Christ, but, spiritually and substantially speaking, you are not united with Him. All who are so united, not only name His name, but they depart from iniquity, and prove by their new obedience to Christ in all things, that the way of salvation is that highway which shall be called the way of holiness.

The whole explanation of the matter is to be found in Christ. He who is revealed as our Righteousness and Redemption is our Sanctification also. He who is titled our Saviour is also titled our Sanctifier. He to whom all power is committed both in heaven and in earth, can make a portion of that power

to rest upon us. He who knoweth what is in man can, out of the gifts which He hath purchased by His obedience, make a right and a suitable application of them to man—can give wisdom where before there was ignorance and folly—can give strength where before there was weakness—can give love where before there was hatred and alienation—can give charity where before there was selfishness—can give forbearance where before there was malice and revenge—in a word, can give you to receive out of His fulness, and for the grace of His own pure and perfect example, can give you the same, so as to make you walk even as He walked, and to change you into His image from one degree of excellence to another, even by the Spirit of the Lord.

Thus shall I judge of your worthy participation in this sacrament. It is a new approach to Christ; and if it be something more than the mere bodily exercise which profiteth little—if it be an approach to Him in faith as well as in appearance, then the effects of such an approach to the Saviour will be a closer union with Him; and as surely as the root sends up support and nourishment to the branches, so surely will the fruit of union to the Saviour be a firmer adherence to His law, and a purer obedience to Him in all things. The Spirit, which is at His giving, is shed forth on all who believe. Faithful is He who has promised it, and He also will do it. The same believing dependence on Christ by which you obtain His body to bear the burden of your offences, and His blood to wash away the guilt of them, will also obtain for you His Spirit to dwell in your hearts, to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, to strengthen them with all might, and to fill them with that love of Christ which will constrain to all obedience.

Go not to think, my brethren, that this is some high, mystical doctrine, admitting of no application to the life and the circumstances of men. Can any thing be more easy to understand than the conduct of Paul when beset with a sore temptation? Did he give way to it, under the overpowering sense of human weakness? No! he made use of the revealed expedient for making head against the temptation. That expedient was prayer; and the promise made to a believing prayer was realized upon him: he besought the Lord, and the grace of the Lord was made sufficient for him, and his strength was made perfect in weakness. Why, my brethren, will you affect to misunderstand me when I say, "Go, and do thou likewise?" When you rise from that table, and go to your homes and to your business, why may you not carry the imitation of the apostle along with you? At all times and in all places may it not be the prayer of your heart—"Support me, O God, in the matter that is now before me?" When you are in the midst of your family, and might be doing good to them by your conversation or example, may it not be the prayer of your heart—"O God, direct me in this?" When you are going to make a bargain, and a convenient falsehood may bring you in a little more of the meat that perisheth—"O God, preserve me from this temptation?" When you are going to have a reckoning with the neighbour who has imposed, or the servant who has disobeyed you—"O God, give me to rebuke with the meekness of wisdom; and if he repents, enable me to forgive him, even as Thou for Christ's sake hast forgiven me?" When invited to a feast —"O God, may I watch every opportunity of ministering that which may be to the use of edifying, and may I refrain my tongue from speaking evil?" When working for your master in the field—"O God, enable me to serve him as diligently as if his eye were upon me, and may I serve him from the heart, as unto the Lord?" When working for your mistress in the family—"O God, keep me from purloining that which is not my own, and by showing all good fidelity, may I adorn the doctrine of our Saviour in all things?" This would be to fulfil the injunction of the apostle, to "pray without ceasing;" this would be to watch for the Spirit with all perseverance; this would be to do all things to the glory of God in the name of Jesus; this would be to make something more of the sacraments than a mockery and a farce;—and I call upon you, my

brethren, to prove that, in receiving these elements, you have received Christ; for if you have received Him in truth you will receive Him in love, and if you have received Him in love, you will yield to Him in obedience.

SERMON XII.

*The Doctrine of Human Depravity.**

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."—ROMANS iii. 10.

THE term beauty was originally restricted to objects of sight. We talked of a beautiful flower, a beautiful tree, a beautiful landscape. The word was appropriated to something external.—The charm which constituted beauty resided in some visible object on which the eye loved to repose, and from which it took in an impression agreeable to the taste and to the fancy. In process of time, however, the term in question obtained a more extensive signification. It was transferred not merely to objects of hearing, but to what was purely moral and intellectual; and we speak in a manner perfectly intelligible to all when we expatiate on the beauty of a sentiment, or even the beauty of a doctrine and the beauty of a speculation.

In this way, when we propose to gain the acquiescence of others in a particular doctrine, there are two distinct circumstances to be attended to—the degree of its beauty by which we can recommend it to the taste, or the degree of its evidence by which we can recommend it to the understanding. There can only be one opinion on the question, which of these two claims should have the precedency. It is the boast of the philosopher, that Truth is the idol whom he worships and that he will follow wherever the light of evidence shall carry him, though it should land him in conclusions the most nauseous and the most unpalatable. A system may have elegance and simplicity to recommend it, and be decked in all the ornaments which the eloquence of its supporters can throw around it; but if a single flaw be found in its evidence, it from that moment becomes the philosopher's scorn; it is his glory to own no authority but Truth, and he throws aside the beautiful speculation as fit only for the amusement of childhood.

Now if this be the attribute of a good philosopher, why should it not be the attribute of a good divine? All that we plead for is the paramount and exclusive authority of evidence, and that the power of evidence upon the judgment shall at all times carry it over the power of beauty upon the taste. All that we demand—and in the demand we see nothing but fairness and modesty—is that a doctrine in theology be tried upon the same principles as a doctrine in science—that the question shall be not what is the most alluring by its beauty, but what is the most convincing by its proofs.

In the prosecution, therefore, of the following discourse, I shall endeavour to lay before you the evidence that we have for the doctrine of the text. That evidence resolves itself into two kinds—the evidence of Scripture, and the evidence of direct observation.

I shall be very short on the evidence which Scripture affords for the doctrine of the text. The text itself is perfectly decisive. It is not in the power of illustration to make it more explicit; and though it had stood unsupported and alone, it carries home the universal corruption of man with an evidence and an authority which it is not in the power of sophistry to resist or to explain away. We forbear bringing forward any more quotations—not because we are at a loss to find them, but because of the multiplicity of passages which offer themselves—because it would be difficult within the limits of a sermon to

* Preached at Cupar on a Sacramental Fast, 30th June, 1813. In the College Chapel, Glasgow, 14th April, 1816.

exhibit even so much as an abridged view of the testimonies to the depravity of man which lie scattered over almost every page of the Bible. Without making so much as a single reference to particular passages, I would ask any man, upon his fair and honest perusal of the New Testament, to tell me what he conceives to be the general purpose of Christ's coming into the world? Did not He come into the world upon a ministry of reconciliation? and does not this imply that before that ministry was accomplished the world was at variance with God? Is not His gospel offered to all men as a remedy? and does not the very conception of a remedy imply the previous existence of a disease? It is not enough to say that he came to remedy our ignorance by instruction. This is true; but did He not also come as a propitiation? and does not the very term propitiation imply the existence of sin? Could I see any traces of a distinction made by the gospel in the terms which it offered to different individuals, then I might understand that it did not proceed upon the corruption of man as a constant and universal fact in the history of the species. But when I find that all are addressed in the same language—when I see no exceptions provided for in the charge given to the apostles to preach repentance and the remission of sins—when I see that one and all of us are called upon to embrace the gospel on precisely the same terms with the most abandoned of sinners—when I see that to become Christians every man of us must have the same faith and the same baptism, which is the symbol of purification from guilt—what am I to infer but that the gospel views all of us as in the same circumstances, as labouring under the malignity of the same disease, and in the same direful state of alienation from heaven, from which it is the kind office of a generous Saviour to redeem and to restore us? If any man says that he is not included in the doctrine of the text, and that he forms an exception to its universality, then Christ may be his teacher, He may be his example, but He is no longer what the Bible represents Him—his Saviour; and that endearing title which forms all the joy of my life and all the hope of my immortality, is little better in reference to him than the mockery of a name; Christianity considered as a scheme of recovery for sinners is frittered into nothing, and the words grace and atonement and propitiation, which force themselves upon the eye in almost every column of the New Testament, are so many empty sounds, without import and without significancy.

To support the doctrine of my text I do not need to refer to the authority of particular passages—I refer to the essential character of the New Dispensation, the grand object of which is to seek and to save that which is lost; and when I am told that there is no other name given under heaven by which man can be saved but the name of Jesus, what am I to understand but that all must obtain the shelter and the patronage of that name before they can secure their admittance into heaven? If there is a man among us who can stand upon the perfection of his own character, then I say of him that he is independent of that patronage; that he can be saved by another name than the name of Jesus; that he can approach the throne of the Almighty in the name of his own righteousness, and can appeal for his passport to heaven to the purity which has guided him, and to the virtue which has adorned him. It strikes me that the whole of Christianity proceeds upon the inability of man to make this appeal—that what he cannot do for himself a kind Saviour has undertaken to do for him; that He announces Himself the Saviour of all who trust in Him, because all stand in need of his interposition; and that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy that He hath saved us. To disown the principle of the text, then, appears to me to be equivalent to an entire subversion of Christianity. It would be cutting away the ground upon which the whole fabric is supported; it would destroy it as a scheme of reconciliation proposed to all, because needed by all. It might remain a beautiful system of morals, which poetry might deck with images, and eloquence expatiate on with visionary rapture, but all the life which gave

substance and animation to its morality would be withdrawn. Though the doctrine of corruption were abandoned as a general principle, the consciousness and the despair of guilt would still continue to haunt the bosom of every individual; there would be no principle to urge him to exertion, because the experience of every one would tell him that this exertion was unavailing—the splendid virtues of the gospel would only serve to remind him of his errors, and to multiply upon his head the terrors of its violated authority; the unexpiated sentence of guilt would still hang over him; and if conscience discharged its part with faithful severity, he would soon feel the system of morals in the New Testament to be so perfect and so beautiful, that, without the stimulus of gospel motives and gospel principles, it were vain to contemplate and hopeless to aspire after it.

This is all the argument for the corruption of man which I shall urge at present on the ground of Scriptural authority. But I take the opportunity of stating, what I hold to be an undeniable principle, that the authority of the Bible is not only completely decisive on this subject, but paramount to every other. I hold it to be not only impious but unphilosophical to go about with an attempt to mould and conform an authoritative doctrine of the Bible either by the arguments of human reasoning, or by the illustrations of human fancy. This, you will observe, is no impeachment upon the supremacy of reason. Let reason be employed in pronouncing upon the claims of Christianity to be a religion from heaven, and in proving that the Bible is not a fabrication of impostors, but the authentic record of inspired truth; let it be further employed in ascertaining, upon the approved principles of criticism, the sense of its original language, and in bringing forward a correct representation of that sense to the illiterate; but after these are accomplished, it is the part of reason to resign her office, for if she advance a single inch further she steps beyond her province; and we appeal to any man who has made a philosophical survey of the human faculties, if there be not as much falsehood and error in pronouncing with certainty upon what reason is incompetent to judge of, as in shrinking from the office of examination with the safe and certain materials of judgment before you. It is the part of reason, amid the clashing pretensions of the various systems which are proposed to it, to seek for the genuine record of the divine will; but it is also the part of reason to listen exclusively to the voice of inspiration after she has found it; and I am not renouncing the authority of my judging principle but following its dictates, when, after the Bible is established as the directory of my faith, I offer to it the unconditional surrender of my understanding, and submit my mind as a blank surface to whatever the Almighty, by His word and by His doctrine, chooses to engrave upon it.

The doctrine of the text forms to a certain extent an exception to the above observations. When the article of faith is without the range of human experience, then there is nothing for it but an unreserved submission of the mind. Such subjects as the dignity of our Saviour's person—the existence of higher orders of beings—the agency of evil spirits in the affairs of the world—the counsels of heaven—the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice in bringing guilty man to favour and to immortality—the influences of the Spirit—these, and many others, stand beyond the limits of unassisted observation, and on them the revelation of God must therefore be received not merely as the supreme but as the only authority. But we meet with other assertions in the Bible which come within the familiar experience of human beings, and which can therefore be tried by that experience. A very simple example of this is when our Saviour says to his countrymen—"When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say there cometh a shower, and so it is; and when ye see the south wind blow, ye say that it will be heat, and it cometh to pass." Our Saviour here tells what prognostics were made in the country of Judea, and what kind of weather usually followed them. The truth of this assertion comes within the testimony of the senses. If confirmed by that testimony,

t just happens in the way that the evidence of His truth and of His divinity would lead us to anticipate; but if contradicted by that testimony, it would have the effect of unsettling our faith—it would stand an impeachment upon His authority as a messenger from heaven, and we might feel ourselves justified in withdrawing our confidence from a teacher who affirmed to be true what we know to be false by an independent channel of evidence. The doctrine of the text is a higher example of the same kind. By asserting the corruption of man, it asserts a fact which comes within the cognizance of the human faculties, and the reality of which may be tried by a direct appeal to the evidence of consciousness. We have the law of God written in our hearts, and we have that law written in a more perfect and explicit manner upon the well-authenticated record of inspiration. The question simply is,—Do we come up to the purity of that law? And it is a question which falls within the legitimate boundaries of human experience. I therefore pass on from the evidence of Scripture to the evidence of human observation, and I do it for the sake of those who have a greater respect for the latter authority than for the former. On the principle of being all things to all men that we may gain some, it is the part of the Christian teacher to withhold no argument which may be effectual in gaining the concurrence of those to whom he addresses himself. The corruption of human nature is perhaps the most offensive doctrine of Christianity to the tasteful admirers of fine sentiment and beautiful morality. They may not be ashamed if their orthodoxy is impeached, but they may be made perhaps to take the alarm if their philosophy is questioned; and if we can once bring the evidence of observation to support us, it may compel their acknowledgment at a time when the authority of Scripture would be found ineffectual. A man may carry in his speculations an indifference to the Bible, and yet sustain his reputation in the cultivated and literary orders; but no man can turn away from the evidence of observation without bringing his character for philosophy into disrepute. It is by following this evidence that modern science has reached her wonderful elevation in these latter days; and if by the same instrument we can establish the doctrine of the text, it may be the means of clearing away from Christianity one of her chief stumbling-blocks—it may extend her triumphs in a new quarter, and by giving her an ascendency over the minds of the speculative, it may lead them to cast down their lofty imaginations—to bring every thought of their hearts into the captivity of the gospel, and into the entire obedience of its humility and its righteousness.

The question of fact, then, which employs us is,—In how far man attains to the perfection of righteousness? and I conceive that to save much false argument and much superfluous illustration, we may bring this question at once to a decisive and effectual touchstone—I would bring his conduct to an immediate comparison with the first great commandment of the law. To estimate the degree of closeness and purity with which he maintains his perseverance in the path of duty, I would fasten upon the greatest of all his duties, and to which every other is referable—I mean his duty to God; and I put it to the conscience of the most perfect man upon earth, in how far every action of his life is under the direction of this great and authoritative principle? Is God always present to his thoughts? Does the fear of Him ever accompany him through the hourly and familiar movements of his history? Is His authority as a lawgiver the perpetual point of appeal, to which he is sure to repair amid the various cases and difficulties which occur to him? Instead of abandoning his conduct to the play of earthly passions and the calculation of earthly principles, does he feel every moment of his life the fear of God operating within him, and exerting the ascendency of a great master-principle to control all the inferior appetites and propensities of his nature? My own experience tells me that I could answer most decisively for myself; and I put it to your consciences if the answer be not applicable to you. So far from feeling the fear of God to be a sentiment

of constant and universal influence, there is a great majority of our time in which we never think of Him. We may at times be visited by a holy feeling of His presence and authority, but the devout affection vanishes with the retirement which gave it birth. The mien and daylight of the world are ever driving away from us the thought of a present Deity; the objects of time engross every faculty; and at the very moment that the countenance of man speaks him to be most in earnest, and that the profoundest of his wisdom is at its busiest exercise, we shall find that it is the interest of this paltry and perishable scene which absorbs him. Look to his mind, and in the subjects which most frequently engage it you see nothing there of the grandeur of eternity, and no sublime reference to that mighty Being who gave it all its sense and all its inspiration. For the greater part of the day God is not in all his thoughts; and though he owes to Him every breath which he draws and every comfort which he enjoys, yet his conduct, so far from being under the certain guidance and authority of the divine law, is at the mercy of every caprice which plays upon him, and every fluctuating vision which comes across his senses.

The simple question is,—Ought this to be so? For if it ought not, man is in a state of actual corruption; he falls below the standard of his duty; and the doctrine of the text has the testimony of experience to confirm it. This habitual negligence of God is a decisive fact furnished by observation; and we have only to compare it with the law written in our hearts and the law written in the New Testament, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, says Jesus Christ, whose authority as a teacher from heaven reason cannot refuse to acknowledge. But let us appeal to the natural conscience of man—and it gives us precisely the same answer. Think of God as your constant benefactor—that He made you, that He sustains you in every moment of your existence—that, to express ourselves with the simple energy of inspiration, in Him you live, and move, and have your being—that in all the joys which are scattered over the pilgrimage of life, we see nothing but the kindness of God always exerting itself in our favour, and meeting us in every direction—that though we seldom look beyond the creatures which surround us, it is God who reigns in these creatures, and makes them subservient to His most wise, His most gracious, His most benevolent purposes—that though in the heyday of youth we are carried along the tide of gaiety without care and without reflection, it is God who gives to the spirit of man all its cheerfulness—that though we stop short in our gratitude at the benefactor who relieved and at the friend who supported us, it is God who reigns over the constitution of the mind, and could by a single word of His power make every companion abandon us, and every friend look upon us with an altered countenance—that though I call the house in which I live my own, and find in the endearments of my family my repose and my happiness, it is God who gave me my home, who spreads security around it, and fills it with all its charities—that though my path in society be dignified by the homage and civility of my acquaintances, it is God who reigns in the human breast, and administers all the delight of social intercourse—that though my eye expatiates in rapture on the landscape around me, it is the living God who beautifies the scene, and gives it all its magnificence and all its glory; in short, that everything we enjoy is a gift—that in whatever quarter happiness is met with, a burden of obligation and dependence lies upon us—that we have nothing which we did not receive—that our all is suspended on God, and that to Him we owe all the praise, all the gratitude, all the obedience.

Now, will any man who is acquainted with the movements of his own breast, say that this praise and this obedience are actually given? Are not the pleasures of life often tasted without acknowledgment? Is not the conduct of life often proceeded in without any reference to the will and authority of

Him who is the author of it? Is not the mind in a state of habitual estrangement from God, His existence absent from our reflections, and His supremacy as a Judge and as a Lawgiver absent from our principles? Go to whatever quarter you please for happiness, there is no escaping the conclusion that God is the giver of it, in His pervading energy which gives effect and operation to all things. You cannot fly out of His presence, nor repair beyond the limits of His sovereignty. Of all the impossibles which ever were attempted, there is none so wild and so irrational as to attempt an independence upon God. It is in virtue of Him that you are held together. He measures out to you every moment of your existence. He gives you not merely the air you breathe, but He gives you the faculty of breathing. He provides for you not merely the external goods which are scattered around you in such bounteous profusion, but it is He who furnishes you with the capacity of enjoying them. You talk of the pleasures of the world, and fly to them as your refuge and your consolation against the displeasure of an offended Deity, but think that it is only by a continuance of His unmerited favour that you have these pleasures to fly to. He can take them away from you; or, what perhaps is a still more striking demonstration of His sovereignty, He can make them no longer pleasures to you. He reigns within as well as without you. To Him you owe not merely what is external, but to Him you owe the taste and the faculty which enjoys it. He can pervert these faculties — He can change your pleasures into disgust— He can derange the constitution of the inner man, and make you loathe as tasteless and unsatisfying what you at present indulge in with delight. or look forward to with rapture. He is all in all. The whole of our being hangs upon Him, and there is no getting away from His universal, from His ceaseless, from His unexcepted agency. Now, do the Almighty the same justice that you would do to an earthly benefactor; measure the extent of His claims upon you by the extent of His benefits; think of the authority over you which, as your Creator and as your constant preserver, He has a right to exercise; think of your perpetual dependence, and that all around you and within you—for every moment and particle of your existence, is upheld by God; and tell me, if either in the thoughts of your heart or in the actions of your life, you come up to the demand which His justice and His authority have a title to prefer against you? The answer is obvious. It may be collected from the heart and the history of every individual. Man, though the most perfect of his kind, falls short of the glory of God. He is forgetful of the hand that formed him, and of the right hand that guides and that sustains him.

There is a delusion upon this subject. If we look abroad on the face of society we must be struck with the diversity of character in the individuals who compose it—some, it is allowed, in the estimation of the world are execrable for their crimes, but others, in the same estimation, are illustrious for their virtues. In that general mass of corruption to which we would reduce our unfortunate species, is there, it may be asked, no solitary example of what is pure and honourable and lovely? Do we never meet with the charity which melts at suffering—with the honesty which disclaims and is proudly superior to falsehood—with the active beneficence which gives to alms its time and its labour—with the modesty which shrinks from notice and gives all its sweetness to retirement—with the gentleness which breathes peace to all, and throws a beautiful lustre over the walks of domestic society? If we find these virtues to be sometimes exemplified in the characters of those around us, is not this an argument which is supplied by experience against the doctrine of the text? And will it not serve in part to redeem humanity from that sweeping and indiscriminate charge of corruption which is so often advanced against it in all the pride and intolerance of orthodoxy? What better evidence can be given of our sense of duty toward God, than adherence to His law? and are not the virtues which I have just now specified part of that law? are not they the very virtues which His authority imposes

upon us, and which impart such a charm to the morality of the New Testament?

Now, to carry you at once into the bottom of this doctrine, let it be observed, that though the religious principle can never exist without the amiable and virtuous conduct of the New Testament, that conduct may in some measure exist without the religious principle. Men may be led to precisely the same conduct upon the impulse of very different principles. A man may be gentle because it is a prescription of the divine law; or he may be gentle because he is naturally of a peaceful and indolent constitution; or he may be gentle because he sees it to be an amiable gracefulness with which he wishes to adorn his own character; or he may be gentle because it is the ready way of propitiating the friendship of those around him; or he may be gentle because taught to observe it as a part of courtly and fashionable deportment; and what was implanted by education, may come in time to be confirmed by habit and experience. Now, it is only under the first of these principles that there is any religion in gentleness. The other principles may produce all the outward appearance of this virtue, and much even of its inward complacency, and yet be as distinct from the religious principle as they are distinct from one another. To infer the strength of a religious principle from the taste of the human mind for what is graceful and lovely in character, would be as preposterous as to infer it from the admiration of a fine picture or a cultivated landscape. They are not to be confounded. They occupy a different place even in the classification of philosophy. We do not deny that the admiration of what is fine in character is a principle of a higher order than the admiration of what is fine in external scenery. So is a taste for what is beautiful in the prospect before us, a principle of a higher order than a taste for the sensualities of the epicure; but they, one and all of them, stand at a wide distance from the religious principle; and whether it be taste or temper, or the love of popularity, or the high impulse of honourable feeling, or even the love of truth and a natural principle of integrity, the virtues in question may be so unconnected with religion as to flourish in the world and be rewarded with its admiration, even though a God were expunged from the belief, and immortality from the prospect of the species.

The virtues, then, to which the enemies of our doctrine make such a confident appeal may have no force whatever in the argument, because, properly speaking, they may not be exemplifications of the religious principle. If you do what is virtuous because God tells you so, then, and then only, do you give us a fair example of the authority of religion over your practice. But if you do it merely because it is lovely, because it is honourable, or because it is a fine moral accomplishment, I will not be behind my neighbours in giving the testimony of my admiration; but I cannot submit to such an error either of conception or of language, as to say that there is any religion in all this. I am not for expunging the lovely and the honourable from the character of man. These qualities have all my friendship and all my applause; and I give them them the most substantial evidence of my regard when, instead of leaving them to their own solitary claims upon the human heart, I call in the aid of religion, and support them by the authority of the New Testament—"Whatsoever things are pure, or lovely, or honest, or of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." But I will not allow that the mere circumstance of their being lovely shall be suffered to degrade or to extinguish the authority of religion; nor can I endure such an injustice to the Author of all that is graceful, both in nature and in morality, as that the native claims of virtue shall usurp in our admiration the place of God—of Him who gave to virtue all its charms, and who formed the heart of man to love and to admire them.

Be not deceived, then, into a rejection of the text by the specimens of moral excellence which are to be met with in society, or by the praise which your own virtue extorts from an applauding neighbourhood. Virtue may exist, and to such a degree, too, as is sufficient to constitute it a lovely object in the eyes of the world; but if in the cultivation of that

virtue there be no reference of the mind to the authority of God, there is no religion. Such virtue as this has its reward in its natural consequences, in the admiration of others, and in the delights of conscious satisfaction; but I cannot see why God will reward it in the capacity of your master, when His service was not the principle of it; nor do I see how He will reward it in the capacity of your judge, when in the whole process of virtuous feeling, and virtuous sentiment, and virtuous conduct, you did not for a single moment carry in your heart any reference to Him as your lawgiver. I do not deny that there are many such examples of virtue in the world, but then I insist upon it that they cannot be put down to the account of religion. They often may and actually do exist in a state of entire separation from the religious principle; and, in that even they go no farther than to prove that your taste is unvitiated—that your temper is amiable—that your secret principles promote the peace and welfare of the community, and will be rewarded with its admiration. It is well that you act your part aright as a member of society; and religion, by making it one of its injunctions, gives us the very best security that wherever its influence prevails it will be done in the most perfect manner; but the point which I labour to impress is, that a man may be what we all understand by a good member of society, without the authority of God as his legislator being either recognized or acted upon. I do not say that his error lies in being a good member of society: this, though a circumstance, is a very fortunate one. The error lies in his having discarded the authority of God, or rather in never having admitted the influence of that authority over his principles. I want to guard him against the delusion that the principle which he has, ever can be accepted as a substitute for the principle which he has not; or that the very highest sense of duty which his situation as a member of society impresses upon his feelings will ever be received as an atonement for wanting that sense of duty to God which he ought to feel in the far more exalted capacity of His servant and candidate for His approbation. I stand upon the high ground that he is the subject of the Almighty, nor will I shrink from revealing the whole extent of my principles. Let his path in society be ever so illustrious by the virtues which adorn it—let every word and every performance be as honourable as a proud sense of integrity can make it; let the salutations of the market-place mark him out as the most respectable of the citizens, and the gratitude of a thousand families sing the praises of his beneficence to the world; if the actor in this splendid exhibition carry in his mind no reference to the authority of God, I do not hesitate a moment to pronounce him unworthy, nor shall all the execrations of generous but mistaken principle deter me from putting forth my hand to strip him of his honours. What! is the world to gaze in admiration on this fair spectacle of virtue, and am I to be told that the Being who gave such faculties to one of His children, and provides the theatre for their exercise—that the Being who called this scene into existence and gave it all its beauties, that He may be innocently forgotten and neglected? Shall I give a deceitful lustre to the virtues of him who is unmindful of his God; and with all the grandeur of eternity before me, can I learn to admire these short-lived exertions which only shed a fleeting brilliancy over a paltry and perishable scene? It is true that he who is faithful in little will be also counted faithful in much, and when regard to God is the principle of this fidelity the very humblest wishes of benevolence will be recorded. But its most splendid exertions without this principle have no inheritance in heaven. Human praise and human eloquence may acknowledge it, but the Discerner of hearts never will. The heart may be the seat of every amiable feeling, and every claim that comes to it in the shape of human misery may find a welcome; but if the authority of religious principle be not there, it is not right with God, and he who owns it will die in his sins—he is in a state of impenitency.

Having thus disposed of those virtues which exist in a state of independence upon the religious principle, we must be forced to recur to the doctrine of the

text in all its original aggravation. Man is corrupt, and the estrangement of his heart from God is the decisive evidence of it. Every day of his life the first commandment of the law is trampled upon, and it is on that commandment that the authority of the whole is suspended. His best exertions are unsound in their very principle; and as the love of God reigns not within him, all that has usurped the name of virtue and has deceived us by its semblance, must be a mockery and a delusion.

But the doctrine of the text might be vindicated even upon lower principles. I might throw out of sight entirely the first great commandment of the law, and direct my exclusive attention to the second—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I might apply to the human character man's own favourite touchstone, and without any reference whatever to the authority of God might try it by the great law of benevolence, reposing on its own charms and its own obligations.

This my time will not permit me to do, but I think it necessary to guard from misapprehension what I have said as to benevolence existing in a state of separation from piety. Do I mean by this to disconnect benevolence from the practice of the Christian, or to throw upon it the slightest aspersion? No, my brethren, benevolence is like to piety: he who wants benevolence has no pretensions to piety—he who loves not his brother whom he hath seen, does not love God whom he hath not seen; and let all speculation be done away, and all argument be given to the winds, rather than that this lovely and characteristic feature of the gospel should suffer the slightest obscuration. By putting the case of an amiable and romantic benevolence existing in a state of separation from the sense of God, and by lifting a voice of condemnation against it, I may have shocked the tenderness of your feelings, and made you recoil in aversion as from the harsh voice of a stern and unrelenting orthodoxy. Spare your agitations, my brethren. I have done no man injustice, for the case is imaginary. Benevolence may make some brilliant exhibitions of herself without the instigations of the religious principle; she may make some romantic sacrifices, and the quantity of money surrendered may be far beyond the average charities of the world; but give me a man who carries out benevolence in the whole extent of its sacrifices; who labours unknown in scenes where there is no brilliancy to reward him; who supports the habit of unwearied well-doing amid the growlings of ingratitude and the provocations of dishonesty; who maintains a uniform tone of kindness in the retirement of his own house and amid the irksome annoyances of his own family; who endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; whose humanity exists as vigorously amid the reproaches and the calumny and the contradiction of sinners, as amid the sad pictures of weeping orphans and interesting cottagers—I maintain, my brethren, that no such benevolence exists without a deeply-seated principle of piety lying at the bottom of it. Walk from Dan to Beersheba, and away from Christianity and beyond the circle of its influences, there is positively no such benevolence to be found. The patience and the meekness, and all the more difficult exercises of benevolence, must be nourished by the influences of heaven, and looking beyond all that dazzles the theatre of the world, must have its eye fixed on a better and a more enduring country. Even the most splendid enterprises of benevolence which the world ever witnessed can be traced to the operation of what the world laughs at as a Quakerish and Methodistical piety; and we appeal to the abolition of the slave trade, and to the still nobler abolition of ignorance and vice which is now accomplishing in the pagan and uncivilized countries of the earth, for a proof that, in good-will to man, as well as in glory to God, your men of piety bear away the palm of superiority in triumph.

I conclude with two observations. If all Scripture and all experience can be brought in to support the doctrine of my text, should not this stir the question within each individual who now hears me—What shall I do to be saved? If there be a throne in heaven and a God sitting upon that throne, what is to

become of me who have trampled on the solemn authority of His law, and come under the full weight of its condemnation? I may wrap myself in a general feeling of security that God is merciful, but in a question of such mighty import as the favour of my God and the fate of my eternity, I should like to have some better security than my own feelings which may be delusive, and my own conjecture which may be rash and ignorant. I have no right to trust to my own conjectures in this, and far less have I any such right in the face of the authoritative message which God has sent to the world upon this very subject. An actual embassy came from God to man upon an errand of reconciliation about 2000 years ago, and the records of this embassy have come down to us collected into a volume, and lying within the reach of all who will take the trouble of stretching forth their hand to it. Why spend my strength upon any conjecture on the subject, when the obvious expedient of consulting the record is before me? Surely what God says of Himself is of higher authority and signification than what I think of Him, and if He has chosen to reveal not merely that He is merciful, but that there is a way in which He has chosen to be so, nothing remains for me but to learn of that way, and obediently to walk in it. If He says there is no other name given under heaven but the name of Jesus; if He says that it is only in Christ that He reconciles the world to Himself; if He says that redemption is only in Him whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation through faith in His blood, that He might be just and the justifier of Him who believeth in Jesus, what have I to do but to count these sayings faithful and worthy of all acceptation? I have been perhaps too long of coming to this conclusion, and adopted too circuitous a line of argument to bring you to it; and while I have endeavoured to maintain through the whole of this process the forms and the phraseology of a philosophical argument, which I know not whether I should have magnified, I rejoice to think that many a simple cottager has got before me, and that under his humble roof there exists a wisdom of a more exalted kind than mere philosophy can ever reach—the wisdom of a Christian who loves his Bible, and rests with firm assurance upon his Saviour. "Father, I thank Thee that while Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, Thou hast revealed them to babes. even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight."

My next observation is in answer to this question—You have attempted to establish the fact of human corruption—you have recommended a simple acquiescence in the doctrine of the Saviour; now what becomes of the corruption after this? Must we just be doing with it as a tremendous necessity of our nature bearing down every power of resistance, and against which it were in vain to struggle? For the answer of this question I make the same reference as before to the record. He who is in Christ Jesus is a new creature—sin or corruption hath no more dominion over him, and the very want which constituted the main element of the disease, is made up to him. He wanted the love of God, but that love is shed abundantly into the heart of every true Christian by the power of the Holy Ghost. He wants the love of his neighbour, but God enters into covenant with all who acknowledge His Son and embrace the Saviour as He is offered to them in the covenant—He puts this law in their hearts, and writes it in their minds—He works in them and dwells in them, so that He becomes their God, and they become his people. The Holy Spirit is given to them who ask it in faith, and the habitual prayer of—Support me in the performance of this duty, or carry me in safety through this trial of my heart and my principles—is heard with acceptance. The power of Christ is made to rest on those who look to Him, and they will find that to be their experience which Paul found to be His—they will be able to do all things through Christ strengthening them. Is all this strange and mysterious and foreign to the general style of your conceptions? then, my brethren, be alarmed for your safety. It is not the peculiar notions of this man, nor the still more peculiar phraseology of that man, which you profess to be strange to, it is the very notions and the very phraseology of the Bible, and

you are bringing yourself under precisely the same relationship with God that you do with a distant acquaintance whom you insult by sending his letter unopened, or despise, by suffering it to lie beside you without counting it worthy of a perusal. Let this day of fasting bring you under a conviction of your sins, and let this salutary conviction shut you up to the only remaining alternative—even the refuge set before you in the gospel. You will there find a free offer of forgiveness for the past, and a provision laid before you by which all who believe are carried forward to amendment and progressive virtue for the future. It is open to all and at the taking of all, but in proportion to the frankness and freeness and cordiality of the offer will be the severity of that awful threatening to those who despise it—How shall they escape if they neglect so great a salvation?

SERMON XIII.

*Divine Manifestations.**

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—JOHN xiv. 21.

IT were well if we could strip every term, and every process signified by that term, of all the unnecessary mysteriousness which is annexed to it. To manifest is to show plainly; and the question comes to be, In what sense can an invisible being, as God or Jesus Christ, show himself plainly to creatures in this world? It appears to me that there may be two ways of it. First, you all understand what it is to have the conception of a distant friend. Your firm belief that he is your friend, is one thing; your lively conception of him is another. The belief may remain steady—the conception may vary every hour in clearness and intensity. Have you never experienced a livelier conception at one time than another of his unwearied regard, of his trusty attachment, of his affectionate looks, of his benignant countenance? Yes, you have, and in those moments, a finer glow of tenderness has come over you, and a feeling of more joyful security in the possession of his friendship. Now, the same God who can endow you with one faculty, can endow you with another, or bring that other, when it pleases Him, into livelier exercise. The same God who can work in you the faith and conception of a distant friend, can work in you the faith and conception of Himself. It is very true that conception may often outstrip a well-grounded faith; but God can prevent this; He can bring the one under the control of the other. He does so in the case of your friend, and your conceptions of him, however exquisite and lively, are restrained by the evidence of memory from running into wildness. Your conception of him may almost brighten into the vivacity of sense, and yet you may conceive no more of him than what you know him to be, and what you remember him to be. And so of God. Your conception of Him may brighten into ecstasy, and yet be restrained from running into any false or distorted view of Him by the control of a sober and rational faith—even that faith which rests upon the evidence of His word. Now this faith and this conception of God are both given us by God. In so doing, God shows Himself to the soul of man. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I am not fond of using terms which might not be readily apprehended by men of mere popular understanding, and should like to feel as if there was none of the obscurity of metaphysics in what

* Preached at Kilmany, 20th March, 1814. At Glasgow, in February, 1817.

I say when I tell you of the distinction between faith and conception. You are conceiving a distinct object when something like a sensible representation of that object is present to your fancy. When that object is an absent friend, the conception of him is at times so lively that you may have heard people say in such a case, "I think I see him; I can figure him in a very lively and impressive manner; his voice, his manner, his countenance, are all present with me." And if it be a voice which you know never speaks of you but with tenderness—if it be a manner which indicates, throughout all its varieties, a steady and unalterable attachment to yourself—if it be a countenance that never beams upon you but with a look of benignity and regard, then it is evident that this lively conception will have an exhilarating influence upon your spirits; you will have a more powerful impression of sensible comfort, in as far as it is dependent upon the friendship of him who is thus exhibited in a way so striking to the eye of your imagination. Such a visitation upon your mind as this will be a visitation of peace, and joy, and affection; and though this be the habitual state of your spirit in regard to him you love, and who is at a distance from you, yet will those periods when the vision of his excellences comes in all its bright and fascinating array into remembrance be at all times counted by you as those most precious moments of delight when his value is most strongly felt, and all the cordiality of his regards is most exquisitely rejoiced in.

Now, my brethren, to give you an idea of the distinction between this lively conception of him, which, in point of vivacity and affection, borders so nearly upon a sensible representation, and that steady faith by which the real existence of this said friend, and all the attributes of worth and of kindness which belong to him, are the matters of your conviction, the former may fluctuate from one day to another, and from one hour to another, while the latter remains absolute and entire at all times, and is just as much the object of thorough belief to-day as it was yesterday, or as it will be to-morrow. There may, perhaps, be no one moment in which I have the least doubt of his existence, or there may be no one moment in which I have the least doubt of his character, either as it regards its own intrinsic merit and its peculiar aspect of tenderness to myself. But with all this unalterable belief, there is one other thing which ever alters, and may be in a state of constant fluctuation. There are moments at which the imagination of my friend flits before my inner man in a brighter perspective; there are moments in which I have a readier command of his every feature and his every peculiarity; there are moments at which his revered person or his smiling aspect of benignity will unaccountably rush upon my heart, and fill it either with the vivid remembrance of former joy or the bright anticipations of future intercourse. Yes, there are such moments familiar to the experience of many a human being, and yet they may be succeeded by other moments when—though abandoned by all this cheering imagery, and left to the dull tenor of their more ordinary thoughts—the belief that your friend is, and that he has the same worth of character and the same warmth of attachment as ever, remains an unvaried and an unshaken element within you.

And I trust you further perceive how, though this conception may bring all this home to the eye of your mind in a manner more pictorial and impressive than the mere belief of it can do, yet it by no means necessarily follows that your conception outruns your belief. It is the office of conception to place your friend, according to all the varied attributes which belong to him, in a brighter representation before you, but still it may not represent any more than you know to be true, and that, as a deliberate judgment of the understanding, you think you have good grounds for believing to be true. You are furnished with the proofs of memory and of past experience for believing the reality of all that you are conceiving. Conception may not add a single feature to its original; it only gives a clearer and more impressive view of all the features which actually belong to him. It may not suggest to you a single idea about him which you may not have good reason

for believing to be just. It may not deal in any of the representations of falsehood, while it brightens and sets into more forcible display before you the representations of truth.

Now the same is true, my brethren, of the invisible beings and doctrines of revelation. I may have a steady and entire belief in the power of God, and yet the conception of that power, as expatiating over all the elements of the moral and material universe, may fill and elevate my imagination, and carry a greater movement of the sublime along with it at one time than another. The faith may be invariable, but the conception may fluctuate. The same is true of His wisdom and of His goodness, and of His holiness, and of His truth. Even His tender mercy, rejoicing over all His works—from which I am so far from being excluded, that, through the word of the gospel salvation, I am invited to share in it—may be believed, and work all the essential influences of belief on my hopes and my feelings. But extreme liveliness of conception is not one of the essential influences of faith. It is very liable to fluctuations. The season of its most powerful visitation may be a season of rapture, and holy joy, and delighted communion with God; but such a season may pass away, and yet the belief which sustained and gave solidity to the whole of this process may be as stable and permanent as ever. These periods of great sensible comfort, and of lively communion with God, will be esteemed by every Christian as the brightest and noblest intervals of his earthly pilgrimage. But I would have you understand that, even after the termination of one such interval, there may be a strong and surviving faith—ay, a faith giving as unequivocal proof of its existence and its vigour as at the time of its more brilliant and ecstatic operation.

Now I hold it of importance to the rationality and soundness of this whole speculation, to observe that what is true of the conception not outrunning the belief in the case of an earthly friend, but merely giving a livelier exhibition to the inner man of what was upon solid and legitimate grounds already believed, holds also true of the objects of faith which are set before us in the New Testament. I may have a far more exquisite and affecting sense of God as my reconciled Father at one time than at another, and yet the steady faith of His being my reconciled Father may never abandon me. But even at that time, when my heart is filled and delighted with this lively sense of the tender mercies of God, I may not be conceiving anything more than what I have ground for believing from fair and legitimate sources of evidence. All that the conception may do is not to add to my knowledge of God, or give me one other notion respecting Him than those I had before; but it may brighten and make clearer to my imagination those truths which I had already admitted into my creed. Should, for example, my conception put any other feature upon God than I find applied to Him in His own revelation, then would it be outrunning a sober and well-grounded faith, and well may I be branded as a visionary and enthusiastic religionist. But should my conception do no more than give me a more adequate impression of these things respecting God which are clearly set down in the declarations of His word; should it so fill me with a sense of His power as to give a more solemnizing impression of it in my spirit, or so fill me with a sense of His goodness in Christ as to make me rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; or so fill me with a sense of eternity as to make me sit lighter than ever to all the vexations of time, and give me the buoyancy of an animating independence on all chances of life and of fortune—why, my brethren, there is nothing wild or visionary in all this. There is no setting before me of any truth not to be found in the record. There is only an investing of such truths with that force and that colour which give them an ascendency over all my feelings that is more than ever in proportion to the vast importance which belongs to them. There is nothing, surely here to provoke the contempt of those who sneer at what they call the beatific visions of Methodism. In such visions as these there is not one ingredient admitted upon which the word of God

does not put the stamp and the sanction of credibility. It is a vision, in short, made up of the solid materials of faith; and, during the whole process of such a manifestation, so far from anything being told us that is not to be found in the Bible, all the manifestation consists in this, that by it the Bible or the field of revelation becomes arrayed with a brighter and a more luminous clearness than to our eyes is habitually spread over it.

But there is still another kind of manifestation. In the first way of it, God gives a clearer and a livelier perception of Himself to the soul. In the second way of it, which I am now referring to, God may work such effects in the soul of man as may carry along with them the evident marks of His special and distinguishing favour. You may experience in yourselves a growing concern about eternity; a growing sense of your own sinfulness; a growing desire after the fulness of Christ; a growing dependence upon Him as all your salvation; a growing distrust of yourselves and joy in the Saviour; and, under the never-failing effect of this new attitude of the soul, a growing advancement in the virtues of the new creature, and a growing conformity to the pattern of worth and loveliness set before us in the gospel. Now this is a work of grace going on in your hearts, and it is of God. Others may see it, and it may be to them a manifest token of the Spirit of the living God. Yet I would not say that there was any manifestation to you in all this, till the work of grace become evident to yourselves. There are differences in this respect. With some the work may be going on for years before they see the hand of God in it, or construe it into a token for good, and they are doomed to an awful and a long-continued sense of guilt and abandonment before they can say with the apostle, Hereby know we that God abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us. Others may rejoice from the very outset of their conversion, and the very first impressions of grace may be attended with such a manifestation of the Spirit as to make it evident to themselves that the good hand of God is upon them. We are not to condemn this joy as premature. Paul felt this joy at the very beginning of the good work upon the souls of his disciples, and he communicated this joy to them, and so led them to share in it, and they could not but feel a confidence that it was God who was working in them, when their revered apostle told them that he was confident of this very thing, that God, who had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. It is the sense of God's agency in the matter which makes every new advance in the accomplishments of the gospel a manifestation of God; and when Paul addressed Timothy—both of whom were far advanced in established Christianity—he did not barely say that they had obtained a spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind, but that they had obtained it from God; for God has not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

So much for the two kinds of manifestation: one consisting in a clear and direct view of God—the other in the consciousness of His good work going on in our souls. And we may add, that the impenitent at times experience manifestations of God which are counterparts to these; that at one time He manifests Himself in wrath to their consciences; and that as he looked from the pillar of cloud and fire upon the Egyptians and troubled them. so the angry God looketh forth upon the wicked, and stands before them in all the majesty of offended justice. At another time He makes them to feel the progress of their guilt; how their souls are hardening and getting seared; how a desperate obstinacy of character is growing upon them; how every step they are taking carries them further in alienation from God; and thus, even in this world, He sends terrors to their hearts, and gleams a deep and awful foreboding over their infatuated way.

In my present discourse I confine myself to the promised manifestations of my text; and there are two sets of hearers who need to be instructed upon this point. The first are those who cannot believe that there is any reality in those manifestations, and who think

that there is mysticism in the very term. These are they who associate all that is unreal with all that is invisible; and yet God is invisible, and they who live in fellowship with God must live in the constant enjoyment of a spiritual manifestation. The Spirit is invisible, and they who rejoice in the Spirit rejoice in that of which they do not know whence it cometh or whither it goeth. The varied objects of faith are invisible, and they who walk by faith, and not by sight, live under the power of invisibles. All that gives rapture to a triumphant deathbed is invisible; and we have the authority of an apostle for the substance and the truth which lie in the joyful exclamations of a dying Christian.—O ye men of the world, who look upon the spiritual exercises of the Christian as so many shadowy illusions, it is you, and not they, who live under the government of shadows. You look no further than to the figures upon that pictured screen which hides God and eternity from the eye of your senses; but on that day when the earth is burnt up, and the heavens pass away as a scroll, this screen shall be withdrawn, and the awful realities on the other side of it will attest that they alone live wisely in the world who live by the power of what is unseen and eternal.

But there is another set of hearers, and to them I chiefly address myself: those who do believe that there is a reality in those manifestations, but feel how miserably short they are in the experience of them—who long for the light of God's countenance, but have not yet tasted what it is to enjoy it—who know that there is a truth and a power in the promise of light and peace, and increase in the knowledge and fellowship of the Father and of the Son, but cannot say that the promise has ever been realized upon them—who stand at a distance from the joys and exercises of the inner man, and are oppressed with a sense of that darkness as to spiritual objects which overspreads all their perceptions and all their faculties. I shall, in the first place, attempt a rapid description of the state of their minds; and I shall, in the second place, lay before you the process of my text, which carries all who describe it to the manifestations they long for.

First, then, as to the state of their minds. There is a general dimness hanging over all their conceptions of those invisible realities with which a spiritual man is conversant. They believe in God, but they want a lively sense and impression of Him. They believe in Christ, but they cannot get that clear view of Him which they aspire after. They believe that God is accessible to all through Him, and this belief operates so far that when they approach the Father it is in the name of the Son, but they do not feel a lively confidence even in this way of access to God. They may not want faith, but they want liveliness of conception, and we all know that conception may become so distinct and so impressive as to approach to the nature of vision. Now you can all understand that to hear of the friendship of a distant acquaintance by the hearing of the ear, even though you have full faith in the testimony, has not so cheering an influence upon you as when you see him beside you, and witness with your own eyes an attachment full of tenderness, and a countenance full of benignity. And so of God. The days are coming when He shall tabernacle with men, when the pure in heart shall see Him, and shall rejoice in His presence. Could we only catch a lively conception of God in Christ, we should have a foretaste of the coming joy. But many labour under a dulness of conception, and from them God is hiding His countenance. They may believe, but they have no joy in believing. They lament their darkness, and are like to give way to gloomy forebodings. They lament that while all is clearness to the eye of the body, all is dimness to the spiritual eye; and that, while the living scenery around them falls with so distinct an impression upon their senses, the God who actuates and animates the whole sits behind an impenetrable curtain, and they cannot apprehend Him.

Now it may help, on the one hand, to quiet their alarms, when they are told that they are perhaps aiming at an impossibility, for God is the Being whom

no man can approach unto; and, on the other hand, it may help to assist their conceptions, when they are told that God's embodied Son was the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and that, therefore, when they want a lively impression of the loving-kindness of God they should think of the kindness which fell from the Saviour's lips, and of the love which beamed from His countenance. But even this view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ may be withheld from them. They want lofty and distinct conceptions of the Saviour; they have not yet obtained the promised manifestations; they may have heard Christ speaking peace to them in His Word, but they have not seen Him looking peace to them with the light of His countenance.

The effect of all this may be a want of sensible comfort. If the perfection of saints in heaven is to rejoice in the fellowship of God, how can I be preparing for this inheritance who have so little of this joy and this fellowship on earth? To be made meet for a place there, I should be making progress here in the tastes, the capacities, and the employments of glorified spirits. Now what a gloomy impression it must have upon my prospects, when I feel within myself that all this is shrouded in darkness from me—that it inspires me with no clear view and no lively emotion; and that while, like other beings who are of the earth, earthy, I can perceive well enough, and think truly enough, and feel a keen enough interest among the visible scenes and objects around me, I feel as if I had no discernment of the things of the Spirit of God—that every effort I make to conceive of them is powerless—and that when I look toward them, I see them wrapped in some deep and awful obscurity which I cannot dissipate.

I might acquiesce in this want of capacity for spiritual contemplations, if I thought it were the necessary or universal lot of Christians in the world, and that they were such as eye could not see nor ear hear, neither could it enter into the heart of man to conceive; but when I hear Christians saying, and with authority too, that God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, I am led to the conclusion that this is a work of the Spirit which I have had no share in; and that, while others experience the light and the triumph of most animating manifestations, I am left to wander a melancholy outcast, unblest by the influences of heaven, and an utter stranger to the perception of its joys.

It aggravates my fears when I examine the other evidences of grace which are more at hand. How can I be growing in the love of God when I have no satisfying view of His countenance? I may be constitutionally generous and upright, but how can I be growing in that Christian love of my neighbour which is like unto the love of God? Where is my strength for the performance of duty while all is darkness around me, and all is languor and hopelessness within me? I may have much effort, and much thought, and much curiosity; but, sunk in this sorrow of withdrawment from light and from comfort, I must be running in uncertainty, and fighting as one that beateth the air; and what with some parts of my conduct which I know to be sins, and other parts of it which I am not sure to be graces, I feel lost and bewildered in a path that is unknown to me.

I shall conclude this first head with observing, in the first place, that the manifestations of my text, if not enjoyed, will be much longed after by all who have begun to contract a spiritual taste; who have begun to feel that there is no sufficiency for them in the things of this world; who are dying to the matters of sense and of time, and are groping their way, though perhaps in darkness and bewilderment, after an interest and a friendship with God. In the language of the psalmist, they say with their hearts, "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift upon us the light of Thy countenance." As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so thirst they after God. If there be no desire after these hidden enjoyments of the Christian life, I see not how there is any love at all to the invisible Father of the spirits of all flesh. Sure I am

that in the matter of earthly friendship there is something more aspired after than the mere enjoyment of a firm confidence in the regards of each other, while the parties stand at a wide and personal distance. There is a longing for personal intercourse. There is an aptitude for each other's company. There is a desire to carry forward the mere intercourse of mind from the calmness of a mental conviction in the goodwill of each other to the vivacity of near and sensible society. And as surely, if there be a real love to God, will there be a delight in communion with Him; and the delight will just be the more exquisite that it be carried forward from the communion of a mere fixed and settled belief to the communion of a near and impressive manifestation; and the more your conception of God approaches to the intensity of sense, the more will be your delight that He, your friend, is brought so present and so near to you; and while the profane laugh at all this as an enthusiastic vision, and the lukewarm, with their cold and established decencies, are just, in heart and in affection, as far from God as are the former, be you assured, my brethren, that you will never enjoy heaven hereafter if you have no relish for the enjoyment of heaven here; and let fellowship with the Father and with the Son; and a clear perception of the character of God; and a rejoicing sense of His mercy in Christ Jesus; and a bright overpowering impression of the grace and the majesty of His character; and, in fact, all those near views of Him, and strong feelings towards Him, and that intimate sense of His presence which comes from a close and impressive manifestation of God to the soul—let these, I say, be branded as they may with the epithets of extravagance and enthusiasm, and as if they marked a man who had let go his hold of all the ordinary principles of the world and wandered in a region of fanatical illusion and of mystic reverie—be assured, my brethren, in spite of all this, that these are the very delights and exercises of Paradise, and the very enjoyments which shed over the eternity of the redeemed all its blessedness and all its glory.

And, second y—though it should be anticipating a little what is to come afterwards—I know that in many instances the distinction is not adverted to between a real faith in the truths of the gospel, and a lively, exhilarating conception of them. Now it is by faith that ye are saved; and therefore it is that there are people who are ever endeavouring to work up their feelings to a high pitch of pleasurable elevation, and are constantly striving after sensible comfort, and founding the most melancholy conclusions upon their want of it, and think that surely, as they have no lively manifestation of the truth, they can have no belief in it, and are therefore destitute of the main-spring and the essential element of salvation. I trust I have said as much as may convince you that faith and conception are two different things; that while the former is the principle on which the salvation of a sinner hinges, the latter affords to him those enjoyments which are most congenial to every mind that feels the world to be a pilgrimage, and heaven to be its home, and the exercises of heaven to be what they have a growing taste and a growing capacity for. But I trust that it will be made to appear how there are other fruits and evidences of faith than the clear and lively discernment of the spiritualities of another world; that in the midst of depression there may be a strong exercise of faith; that under the hidings of God's countenance there may be a most resolute and inflexible faith; that under the operation of languid and overborne faculties there may be a steady operation of faith; that, with an utter confusion and mistiness of the mind about what is unknown, there may be a most determinate cleaving of the mind to what is known; that, labouring under the want of manifestation, there may at the same time be the having of the commandments of Christ, and the keeping of them; that previous to the accomplishment of the last clause of my text, in which our Saviour promises to manifest Himself, there may be a process going on with the believer which our Saviour will interpret into an evidence of love for Himself, and for which He has given the assurance that His Father will love him back again, and

to encourage him in the path of obedience, promises that He will make all his darkness to emerge in the light of a cheering manifestation.

I now come to the second head of discourse, under which I shall attempt to lay before you the process of my text, which all describe who arrive at the promised manifestations.

When fatigued and disappointed by the utter fruitlessness of all my exertions, is is most important to be told, as I am in the text before me, that the light I am in quest of is at the giving of the Saviour. This is confirmed by another passage in the New Testament, where it is said that Christ shall give the light. One may arrive at a quiescent belief, but he will never arrive at clearness or vivacity of conception, or even at a right belief of the New Testament, by the mere steps of an argument. The wisdom of this world may enable me to enroll a truth even of the Bible among the articles of my speculative creed; but so to impress it upon my heart as to serve the purpose of comfort or direction, is the work of a higher hand. I now understand how truth, as to all its practical uses, may be hidden from the wise and the prudent, and revealed unto babes; and when I return from the parade of demonstration, and wait in dependence and prayer upon Him who is the light of the world, I see how, unless a man be converted and become as a little child, he shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Meanwhile, I learn that so long as I toiled separately from Christ, and out of the way which He prescribed to us, I was toiling in vain—that I must keep by Him as the Being who retains in His custody the light I am in quest of—and giving up all experiments of my own, I must just adhere, and that most scrupulously, to the line which He has chosen to lay down for me.

Be assured, my brethren, that if the saving faith of the New Testament be not of ourselves, but the gift of God, no effort of ours which does not recognize the sovereignty of God in this matter, will ever conduct us to this faith, make the effort as strenuously as you like. Bring to it all the powers of a most argumentative and penetrating understanding—betake yourselves to every such expedient for working within you a belief of the truths of the Christian revelation, as you make use of in working within you a belief of the truths of political economy, or of the physical and mathematical sciences—there may be some result, I grant you, from such an intellectual exercise; your objections may be silenced, and your judgment be subdued out of all its resistance to the truth, and your active hostility against it be disarmed, and the mind be brought into the posture of resting in the conclusion that Christianity is an authentic religion from heaven. And yet, my brethren, the faith which you think to be in you may, in fact, not be the saving faith of the gospel at all. When I read that gospel, I see fruits and influences assigned to faith which, in many thousand instances of speculative acquiescence, I cannot perceive to be realized on the heart or on the life of those who profess it. The faith of the gospel is a something different from this, for it is a something which comes out of a new heart—it is a something which works by love—it is a something which overcometh the world—it is a something which brings affection and practice, and a new aim, and a holy walk, and consolation along with it. That faith about the matters of Christianity which the power of argument hath wrought, and wrought just in the same way that it works a faith in the matters of philosophy, is positively a something belonging to another class of principles altogether from the faith which availeth; and we are, therefore, not to wonder that it should differ from the other in the steps by which it is brought into existence—that there should be a peculiarity about the way in which it originates—that the mere operation of these expedients, which will suffice for the production of the former, should be altogether inadequate to the production of the latter; and it is under the power of these considerations—under the positive experience of the insufficiency of bare argument—under a feeling that a naked intellectual acquiescence in the truth may be utterly fruitless, and have not one particle of the life and influence of the great gospel principle belonging to it,

that I count it a saying worthy of all acceptation, that faith is not of ourselves—that it is wrought in us with power—that it is the gift of God.

Now it is very true that God may be said to manifest Himself in the act of giving faith, and, further, to manifest Himself in the act of increasing the faith that we have already received. But, referring to what has been already said about the distinction between faith and conception, I do not think that invariably the one or the other of these forms all the manifestations of my text. I can figure to myself a dulness of conception when there is no abatement of the principle of faith, and the liveliness of conception with no additional vigour given to that principle. The truths of the gospel may be brought more clearly and more strikingly home to the discernment of the mind at one time than at another; and if these truths relate to the character of God, or of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, they may appear to the eye of the understanding more brightly than before in the features of truth, or holiness, or kindness, or long-suffering. In these cases the soul is enjoying a clearer manifestation of the Father or of the Son—is exercising a closer fellowship with them—is receiving through the medium of its mental perceptions a foretaste of those pure and affectionate transports which will be perfected in heaven when the Divinity shall reveal Himself in all the glories of an immediate presence to His worshippers—when all those features of grace and of majesty which belong to Him shall be placed before them in visible and direct contemplation, and they shall reap through all the ages of a secure and rejoicing eternity the reward of the pure in heart—they shall see God. The glass which now intercepts from the eye of the mind the realities of the future world is so dim that we see them but darkly, and no power or exertion of our own can brighten or improve its transparency. But what we cannot do for ourselves Christ can do for us. He expressly claims for Himself in the text the sovereignty and the control in the work of those manifestations. He says, I will manifest myself; and, in so doing, He gives an important practical direction to the man who seeks and is in earnest after the light which he does not yet enjoy. He tells him what surely it is of the utmost importance for him to know, and what may have an essential influence in guiding him to the manifestations which he aspires after. He tells him that his own native and unassisted powers will never lead him to the accomplishment of his object. He gives him to understand that the manifestations he is in quest of are in the hand of Jesus Christ; and if there be any difference in point of effect between the result of the process carried on without any reference to Him who alone can give to that process all its efficacy, and the result of a process carried on in obedience to Him with whom the efficacious influence is deposited, the informations of the text point the way by which this difference may be realized.

We already, then, know as much as should serve to lighten the dark and melancholy inquirer of some of his anxieties. Hitherto he has missed his object; but perhaps the reason of this is that he was out of the way to it. From the moment that this is suggested, a prospect of relief begins to dawn upon him, and the prospect is inconceivably brightened, when an infallible guide comes forward with the offer of his direction and his services. It is well that he is casting about for light, for this proves him to be awakened; and to cheer and sustain him before he enters upon the way to it, let me whisper one of the never-failing promises into his ear: Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light.

First, then, it appears from the text, and a verse a little below, that the manifestations promised by the Saviour are given to those who love the Saviour. The text I have already set before you; the other verse is an answer to a question respecting these manifestations: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

This may throw the dark and bewildered Christian at as great a distance from his object as ever. He replies, "O, but I do not love Him; and when I try

I find that I cannot love Him." The truth is, that he cannot summon up Jesus Christ as a lovely and engaging object to the eye of his mind. He has not yet arrived at such manifestations, and his poor faculties cannot clothe the Saviour in the vivid colours of reality; he cannot form Him into a picture on which his fancy may rest and be gratified. This is his aim; but Jesus Christ chooses to humble him into a conviction of his vanity; He checks his adventurous flight into the region of invisibles. The man was daring enough to carry his creative imagination into the other world; but he found no rest to the sole of his foot, and, baffled in the enterprise, he falls from it in despair. Why, he is precipitating the business. To use a homely phrase—and let us not disdain to press any phrase into the service of illustrating a subject so deeply interesting to all of us—he is cutting before the point. The manifestations which he must be content to wait for, and to work for in the prescribed way, he attempts to form by the creative energy of his own talents. Christ will give him light if he do as he is bid; but this high attribute of commanding the light to shine out of darkness he must not arrogate to himself. Now this is what he is doing when he sets up his own arbitrary test of love to the Saviour; and no wonder if, upon the application of this test to the state of his own heart, he is heard to exclaim, "I cannot love Him;" but give up your own test, and take to the test which your Saviour lays down for you. It is a familiar and a practicable test, and is well calculated to check the aerial fancy which has hitherto occupied and misled you. "He who hath my commandments, who hath received them, and knowing them to be mine, keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

Let us go, then, to the commandments; and though we lost ourselves in the unauthorized exercises of fancy, we shall not be so apt to lose ourselves in the obviousness of a prescribed task. We shall there find a plain and intelligible way to the thing we are in quest of; and Christ, at His good time, will give us these manifestations which it is our duty patiently to wait for, if we firmly persevere in the course that leads to them.

But let us descend to particulars—let us take up the very first commandment of this chapter, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Some may think that we have not yet succeeded in clearing away the darkness; for, under the remaining influence of the error which I have been attempting to expose, they may think that to believe in Christ, Christ should stand revealed to the eye of their mind in all the impressiveness of a specific form. But what! is it necessary to have a bright and special conception of a being before we can put faith in the word of his testimony? No, it is not. There are thousands who believe in Christ, and would stake all they hold dear in the world upon the truth of his declarations, and yet are utter strangers to any bright or exhilarating view of the Saviour. I will not vouch for their sensible comfort; but, upon the strength of the saying, that he who believeth shall enter into life, I vouch for their safety. The time is coming, I promise them, when their hearts shall be blest by lively and endearing images of Christ; but in the mean time I call upon them, though they cannot bring their conceptions to a distinct view of the Saviour, to keep their convictions steady and unshaken in the faith of Him. Hold by this as the anchor of your soul, that what He hath said is true; and like those who against hope believed in hope, your faith will prove itself a firmer principle by maintaining its vigour even in that season of darkness when the other powers and exercises of the mind refuse to go along with it—when cheerfulness has fled, when sight gives you not an object to rest upon, and conception labours in vain after images of joy. Why, my brethren, in pity and accommodation to the weaknesses of our feeble nature, God promises life to them not who conceive brightly, or who imagine vividly, of the Saviour, but to those who believe in His name. He leaves us not to wander among the uncertainties of fancy, but he gives us a familiar and palpable name on which to rest our confidence. I may not be able to summon up an

image of the Saviour, but I can at all times lay hold of His name; and unto the invisible Being who bears it I will ascribe all the power, and truth, and kindness which I find ascribed to Him in the New Testament. I will cleave to the saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." On this I shall rest my salvation, for I shall cease not to pray for it in the name of Christ. On this I shall rest my hope of the promised manifestations, for in the name of Christ I will put up my prayers for them. On this I shall rest my security for keeping all his commandments, for I will go to Him, or, at least I will make mention of His name, when I implore the will and the power of doing all things through Him strengthening me.

Thus furnished, I pass on to the other commandments; and while some, at the very outset of their Christianity, ramble in pursuit of frames, and raptures, and manifestations, let me take the humble but obvious path of duty which my Saviour lays before me. Thus would I relieve myself of the pains of uncertainty; and, instead of walking on unknown ground, with no other light to direct me than the sparks of my own kindling, I go to the plain way of our Saviour's commandments, and rejoice to think that, while performing the very least of them, I am taking the very nearest road to the light which I aspire after. Kind and merciful provision! I would be overwhelmed in the darkness of the higher exercises, if I were called upon at this moment to prove a rapture which I do not feel, and to rejoice in a fellowship with the Father and the Son which I am not sure that I have ever experienced. There is a veil between me and those higher exercises, and to penetrate beyond this veil, there must come down upon me from above the light of a clearer manifestation than I have yet gotten. I do not deny the truth of these manifestations. How could I, in the face of my text, and in the face of sober and declared experience from the mouth of many thousands of Christians? No, I do not deny them; I long to realize them. But, O merciful provision to the babes in Christ Jesus! to reach this ground, which is still dark to them, there is a path set before them which wayfaring men, though fools, may walk in. Jesus Christ has poured the clearest light over the every-day path of duty, and has given the solemn authority of a requirement from Him to His lessons and His laws. The higher exercises may be to me incomprehensible; but surely there is nothing incomprehensible in the exercise of kindness among the needy, in the exercise of patience among the irksome, in the exercise of forgiveness among the injurious. I must wait until I obtain light and capacity for the one; but in the mean time, let me firmly attach myself to the other. On the ground of obvious and plainly revealed duty, let me make a straight path for my feet; let me rejoice that I have found something which I clearly and certainly know to be the will of my Saviour concerning me; and strengthened by that Spirit which, in simple dependence upon the promise, I have only to pray for, let me yield a willing performance, and keep by the commandments. The Saviour is not blind to what is going on in me. He sees it; and, O encouraging promise to a dark, and forlorn, and alienated creature, he accepts it as the evidence of love. In His good time He will send help from the sanctuary; He will give light and manifestation to my soul. As yet I may enjoy it not; but I shall wait for it, and in so doing, I am only keeping another of the commandments. "Wait upon the Lord;" let me fear the Lord; let me obey the voice of His servant; and even though I walk in darkness and have no light, let me trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon my God. It is a good thing quietly to wait for the promised deliverance.*

I am sensible that this is reversing the process which many attempt, and which many fail in. Why, at the very commencement of their course they get out of sight from all their acquaintances; they can talk of their joys and their experiences, while, by their habitual neglect of the plainer duties, they disgrace the good cause in the eyes of those who are without, and prove to them who are within that they are

* Isaiah l. 10; Lament. iii. 26.

walking in sparks of their own kindling. Such shall lie down in sorrow. But do you, my brethren, keep by the process of my text. Give your earnestness to the every-day duties of the gospel, and force the testimony of the world by your display of its virtues and its accomplishments. The men of the world laugh at the experiences of the advanced and cultivated Christian; but do you put them to silence by a firm and consistent exhibition of whatsoever things are pure, or lovely, or honest, or of good report. Then in time you will realize the description of the apostle, "As unknown, and yet well known." Be well known in the world for your integrity, for your honour, for your humanity, for your active and disinterested benevolence, for all that the world, dark and undiscerning as it is, knows how to applaud and how to sympathize with. But in respect to the life that is hid with Christ in God; in respect to the manifestations of my text; in respect to fellowship with the Father and Son; in respect to their taking up an abode with you by the Spirit, and those bodies of yours becoming the temples of the Holy Ghost; why, in respect of all these, you must lay your account with being utterly unknown. This they do not understand, for they do not experience it, and the Saviour manifests Himself to you in such a way as he does not unto the world.

Oh that what I have said could be converted into a lesson of patience or of comfort with any melancholy Christian who may now hear me! To divert his melancholy, I give him something to do, and refer him for his daily task to those duties of the New Testament which are of daily and hourly recurrence. This is the way revealed in my text for conducting you to the manifestations you long after. Weeks, and months, and years may elapse before they arrive; but believe and persevere, for this is the faith and patience of the saints. There may at this moment be a dark screen between you and the cheering light of our Saviour's manifestations; but surely there is no such screen over the lessons of your daily walk; the duties of mutual love and mutual forbearance; the prayer for grace and light in our Saviour's name; and the faith, however faint its impressions on your comforts may be, that God is waiting to be gracious, and the time of your deliverance is coming. Hold fast by what you do see, and God in His good time will reveal what you do not see. Hold fast by known duties, and you will come to experience what are yet unknown and unfelt privileges. God will do for you exceeding abundantly beyond what you have now the power either of thinking or of asking for. He will throw a radiance over your heavenly contemplations; and the Spirit of God will witness with your own spirit that you are indeed His children.

SERMON XIV.

*Defence of Religious Enthusiasm.**

"But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."—ACTS xxvi. 25.

IT might be difficult to give a definition of madness: but it is not so difficult to understand the circumstances which often dispose a neighbourhood to fasten the imputation of madness on any individual. It strikes me that the leading circumstance which gives rise to such an imputation is a great devotion of mind on the part of the individual to some one theme or subject which his acquaintances around him do not understand and do not sympathize with. They cannot enter into his tastes or feelings or pursuits, and therefore they

* Preached at Kilmany, 3d April, 1814. At Cupar, 19th February, 1815. At Glasgow, 13th August, 1815.

call him unreasonable; and, if he give his whole mind to the subject, they call him mad. He has suffered some unaccountable topic to run away with him; and because it is a topic which has no attraction for them, they pronounce the man who is so run away with to be under the influence of derangement. We doubt not that a solitary star-gazer in some remote or Highland valley, where astronomy was never heard of, would fall under this imputation, and all his apparatus of books and telescopes would only serve to confirm it. It is true that now-a-days such a valley is scarcely to be met with; astronomers are admitted to all the credit of rationality; but this would not have happened had there been only one astronomer in the world. They have appeared in sufficient number to establish themselves, and the certainty of those practical results which all may appreciate, gives a credit to those abstract and difficult speculations of which a few only are capable. Still, however, there are some obscure and illiterate districts where the honours of astronomy are unknown, or where only a few are enlightened enough to acknowledge them; and should one of these few give himself devotedly to the science, he would share the fate of the minstrel: "Some might call him wondrous wise, but some pronounce him mad."

Now, my brethren, I appeal to you from this judgment, and ask if, in point of truth, you think it a fair one? Is not the charge of madness fastened upon the individual in question just because he is wiser, and abler, and higher in the scale of intellectual dignity than the people around him? Do not you see that if the estimate were to be formed on the mere strength of votes and of numbers, it might be a delusive one? Should not the question of his madness be tried upon its own principles? and were it so tried, would it not be clear as day that, while he was standing on a respectable elevation, the little world of his acquaintances were groveling in all the bigotry of ignorance? And would not this have been equally true, though in the great world there had only been one astronomer? All the world might have thought him mad, but all the world would have been wrong; and his memory would have been handed down with ridicule only because in the high attributes of genius and contemplation he stood the greatest and most distinguished of the species.

A man may carry in his mind an entire devotedness to astronomy, and a man may carry in his mind an entire devotedness to religion, and in both cases there may be a circle of observers who refuse to sympathize and go along with him. It is true that religion is not purely an intellectual subject—its peculiarities are not confined to matters of speculation—they extend to the conduct, and may be exemplified by men of the humblest talents and lowest walks in society. Still, however, where there is a want of sympathy there will be a disposition to ridicule—a disposition to give names and to throw out imputations, and to fasten the charges of madness and melancholy and Methodism on the man who is altogether a Christian. It is not to be wondered at that such an imputation should be preferred against him who is a Christian in the full extent and significancy of the term, for the very principle which lies at the bottom of the imputation, and serves to explain it, is expressly asserted in the New Testament. This principle is neither more nor less than a want of sympathy and common understanding between the men of vital Christianity and the men of the world. "Ye are not of the world," says our Saviour, "therefore the world hated you." The children of this world are spoken of as a totally different order of beings from the children of light. Christians are called upon not to be conformed to the world, but to be conformed to something else, which we may be sure was very different from the world. The wisdom of this world is said to be foolishness with God, and with those therefore to whom the Saviour hath given power to become the children of God. And, finally, such is the want of understanding betwixt Christians and the men of the world, that John says of himself and his fellow-disciples, "The world knoweth us not;" "marvel not if the world hate you."

Here, then, we behold Christians placed in those very circumstances

where they are exposed to the full operation of the principle which I have been illustrating. If Christians indeed, they will with their whole mind serve the Lord Jesus, and give their whole heart to a business in which the world cannot sympathize with them. This direction of all their faculties to what to the world at large is an unknown and unaccountable object is the very thing which will bring down the full cry of ridicule upon them. It throws them at a distance from the tastes and enjoyments of ordinary men. It makes the Christians of the present day what Christians were in the times of the apostles—a peculiar people. It is this peculiarity which holds them up to the mockeries of the world. They are outnumbered, and the loudest laugh must rise from the multitude on the broad way. In the game of ridicule, indeed, they will have it all to themselves, for Christians are not disposed to laugh, but to pity. Their only weapons are the still small voice of persuasion, and the mildness of an affectionate behaviour. But all this will not save them from being laughed at; and if we hear of the oddities of the solitary and abstruse and devoted astronomer, we are sure to hear also of the oddities of the entire and devoted Christian.

It is true, that if all or even the majority were decided Christians, they would present such a countenance to the world as to silence the voice of ridicule. Christianity would cease to be that peculiar thing which provokes men to laugh at it. Go to a Moravian village, and you meet not with a few Christian individuals, but with a Christian society, where the virtues of the gospel are exemplified in all their primitive simplicity and fulness—where every day of the week wears a Sabbath complexion, and every sentence that falls from them is tinctured with the phraseology of the New Testament—where such a faith as theologians only describe animates every heart, and such a charity as poets only dream of is realized in the practice of every individual—where all live not to themselves, but to the Redeemer who died for them—where every other business is made subservient to the business of piety—where this appears to be the main concern, whether at work among their families, or in those assemblies of love, where music falls in the gracious strains of sacredness and peace upon the ear of the wandering traveller. Holy men! you have indeed chosen the better part, and have withdrawn to the quietness of your own villages from a world that is not worthy of you! Had you mingled with us, your good would have been called evil—nor would all the mildness of your virtues have saved you from the persecution of our contempt. The imputations of madness and Methodism would have been lifted up against you, and the world's dread laugh would have been sure to have followed the men who give up all for eternity.

Now, I have to put the same question to you as before—Is this judgment a fair one? Should not the question be tried upon its own merits? or are we to suffer the mere strength of numbers to carry it? Does it follow that we are wrong, because the weight of numbers is against us? Why, the weight of numbers is against Christianity in its present form—that is, against the Christianity of the New Testament; but we should think of the many who crowd the way to destruction, and the few who find the way to eternal life—we should think of the little flock, on the one hand, and the world lying in wickedness on the other—we should think of the very thing which is highly esteemed among men being abomination in the sight of God, and the wisdom of God being in them that perish foolishness—these, and other truths resting on the same solemn authority, we should think of, before we give way to the clamorous contempt of the multitude, or suffer the ridicule of the majority to overbear us.

The term expressive of contempt varies with the age and country. Paul was called mad in the judgment-hall of Cesarea. A man with the devotedness of Paul would in the court of Charles II. have been called a Puritan—in a conclave of high churchmen he would be called a Methodist—in our tasteful and literary circles he would be called a fanatic—in a party of ecclesiastics where coldness passes for rationality, he would be called an enthusiast—and in private life, where secularity and indifference

form the tame and unceviating features of almost every company, he would, if altogether a Christian, be spoken of as a man whose wrong-headed peculiarities rendered him a very odd and unnatural exception to the general character of the species.

In the prosecution of this discourse I shall attempt to reduce what is commonly laughed at as enthusiasm into its leading ingredients, and to prove that the men who possess such enthusiasm as this are not mad, but that their words and their ways are truth and soberness.

The first ingredient is a deep sense of eternity in the heart—leading him who has it to live by the powers of a world to come. We have here both a principle and a conduct—such a principle as receives no countenance from this world's sympathy, and such a conduct as receives no countenance from this world's example. They both serve to mark a peculiar character—to remove him to a distance from the feelings and pursuits of other men—to throw him out of the range of their sympathy. An air of peculiarity is, to the undiscerning eye of the world, an air of folly and extravagance. It provokes ridicule—it brings down epithets of contempt—it is construed into some perverse and unaccountable direction of the understanding. The light and the frivolous laugh, and your cold, rational judicious men wonder at this devotedness of mind to an object which they cannot go along with. The man who walks by faith, and not by sight, is altogether out of their element, and they cannot breathe with comfort in his. There is a barrier betwixt them, and till the mighty Spirit call them out of darkness into light, and open their eyes, which are now blinded by the god of this world, the barrier is impassable. The man whose main concern is eternity is at antipodes with the general run of people in the world. Go at random into any company, and tell me what else is talked of than the prices, and the news, and the entertainments of the day which passes over them. Every topic is temporal; and surely, surely if out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, every desire, every feeling, every affection is towards what is temporal. Will not the man who has his conversation in heaven—will not the man who rejoices in hope of the coming glory—will not the man who labours for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life—will not the man who is diligent to be found without spot and blameless on that mighty and decisive day which is to usher in the march of eternity—will not such a man be an exception and a rarity among the secular companies of the world? Yes, he will; and the only way to escape their derision would be to confine the elevation of his principles to the silence and the solitude of his own bosom. If he dares to whisper them, he is disgraced and stared at, or the loud laugh of all his acquaintances is ready to overwhelm him.

But surely, surely it is he, and not they, who is on the side of truth and soberness. Were I asked what is that which mainly distinguishes wisdom from folly, I would say that it is the power and the habit of anticipation. An infant has no anticipation. It is the creature of present appearances. It rambles with a delighted eye from one object to another; and if its amusement be wrested from it for a single instant it abandons itself to despair, nor does the prospect of what is to come round again the next minute offer any alleviation to its simple and unreflecting bosom. The infant rises to a schoolboy, and the power of anticipation is formed in him. He can look forward to the joys of the next holiday—they soothe the irksomeness of his confinement—they make him faithful to his task, and prove that he can gather something from futurity to guide and to encourage him. At the end of his boyhood I see a further stretch of anticipation. He verges toward the grave and serious and calculating man. He looks thoughtful, and can talk of his wishes and his plans beyond the period of his apprenticeship. The stream of years carries him on to confirmed manhood, and gives the last finish to his range of temporal anticipation. He can now take a farther look into futurity—he can think of that competency which is to be the fruit of his accumulations, and that retirement which is to dignify the evening of his days—he

can look forward to the settlement of those children who are now frolicking in infancy around him; and the light playfulness of their hearts, joying in the present, and caring for nothing beyond it, is in striking contrast with the state of heart in the parent, brooding in serious calculation over the plans of a distant futurity. He hath become a man, and put away childish things, and you look upon the change as respectable and manly; but tell me, my brethren, upon what mysterious principle it is, that if the same anticipation shall extend its flight a little way further, and pierce beyond the curtain of the grave, it loses in the sight of the majority of this world all its honour, and the terms of fanaticism and folly are employed to cover it with disgrace? Anticipation is the very feature of the mind which distinguishes wisdom from folly, which distinguishes manhood from infancy. It is that feature the want of which is idiotism, and the presence of which is sense and understanding; and that man is the wisest of the wise who, in the calculations of trade, or politics, or war, can weigh the most distant consequences, and who from the eminence of his superior discernment can command the farthest view into that region of futurity which lies before him. Surely, on this very principle the man still wiser than he is the Methodist or the Moravian, whom you despise;—he who can renounce the world for eternity—he who can sacrifice the present enjoyment for the distant advantage of a place in heaven—he who, while death acts as a barrier to the plans and the prospects of worldly men, can carry his anticipation beyond it, and make it his business to lay up for immortality. You admire the far-sighted sagacity of wise and reflecting men. The man who is altogether a Christian sees farther than any of them. He shoots ahead of them all—he stands on a higher eminence, and a mightier range of prospect is submitted to him. Is this the man whom you call mad, and whom your sober and secular and business men wonder at for his enthusiasm? Yes, it is very true there is a difference in their objects;—they labour for the meat that perisheth—he looks beyond the grave, and shapes his measures by what he knows of the country on the other side of it. Time will show on which side the madness lies; she will carry us forward to our death-beds, and then she will arbitrate the question Yes! you men of the world, who were so wise in your generation, you perhaps gained the objects you were aiming at—but where are they now? They are all over and gone, and you look back upon them as the frivolities of an idiot dream. Look at the children of light; they only can die in peace, for their futurity is richly provided for, and the way which leads to such a provision is surely a way of truth and soberness.

The next ingredient of that madness with which Paul, and every Christian like Paul, is liable to be charged, is a deep sense of God leading him who has it to do all things to His glory. You will all admit the singularity of such a character, and the transition is not very far in this world's estimate from what is singlar to what is odd, and from what is odd to what is ridiculous. Strange, that an entire dedication of man to his Maker should bring down upon him epithets of contempt! But so it is. The very term in the English language most expressive of devotedness to God, has become in the mouth of many an epithet of disgrace. That term is godliness; and it must be familiar to some who now hear me, that to say of a man, "he is one of the godly," is the most effectual way of tricking him out to the laughter of his acquaintances. How are we to account for that fear which many labour under of being detected in the attitude of prayer? Is it not because prayer is the object of ridicule? The sound of an approaching footstep raises many a Christian from his knees, and the presence of a worldly visitor forces many a parent to suspend the worship of God in his family. To pass from no family worship at all to the observance of it once a day—or to pass from the observance of it once a day to a morning and an evening sacrifice—would be put down by many as an approach to the extravagance of Methodism. The voice of psalms heard from the house of a man who had just begun to signalize himself by his religion

would provoke the merriment of many of his townsmen. I bring forward all this, because the most effectual method of establishing a position is to rest upon facts; and they go to prove that a principle the most fitted to dignify human beings is held by human beings in disgrace—that the praise of his fellow-men is often withheld from him who seeks the friendship of his God; and, strange to tell, that by the voice of many a society, he is the most degraded who most closely and most frequently approaches to the Monarch of the Universe!

But devotedness to God is a principle, and prayer is only one of the expressions of it. If the principle exist, it will not confine itself to this one expression. With the perfect man, it will give direction to every step of his conduct, and throw a colour and an aspect of sacredness over the whole of his history. With this principle in his heart, let him go into a company, and if, in obedience to the will of God, he tries to minister that which is to the use of edifying, is there no danger of his being rated as an enthusiast? With this principle let him go to a market, and if in that scene where dexterity is applauded, and a thousand convenient falsehoods are uttered without remorse, and listened to without indignation, he tries to acquit himself with simplicity and godly sincerity, is there no danger of his being laughed at as a simpleton? With this principle let him go to Parliament, and however pure the benevolence or splendid the patriotism of what he pleads for, is there no danger of his being branded as a saint or a hypocrite? With this principle let him stay at home, and preside over the arrangements of his family; and if in bringing them up to the Lord he dares to be unfashionable, will there be no contempt for the father and no pity for the children as the victims of a weak and fanciful scrupulosity; and in the very spirit of Festus when addressing Paul, will there not be many of his neighbours ready to pronounce him a madman?

Go not beyond the average Christianity of the world, and you escape all this. But if it be true, as the Bible says, that the world lieth in wickedness, must not every man who fears his God and keeps His commandments, go beyond the average of such a world? He must either signalize himself, or he must share in the general condemnation; and I fear that he takes up with a very meagre Christianity indeed who only admits so much of it as will allow him to pass among his acquaintances without ridicule and without observation.

But let us not give way to the clamours of the majority. Let us treat this question as we would like to do every other; let us treat it rationally, and try, upon its own principles, on which side the madness lies, and on which the truth and the soberness. God is invisible; nor will He cease to be so till the commencement of that era in the history of His administration when He shall tabernacle with men. But He has not left Himself without a witness; and sure I am that the vast majority of my hearers admit as much of the power and sovereignty of God as make it the true wisdom of man to do His will and cultivate His friendship. Our life is in His hand; He compasses all our ways—and go where we will we shall never find a place beyond the limits of His omnipresence. Did He overlook us we might be unmindful of Him; but, wonderful to tell, the same eye which embraces creation in all its amplitude, is fastened attentively upon every one of us. The same Being who counteth the stars, numbers every hair of our head, and registers every minute of our existence. Minuteness cannot escape Him, variety cannot bewilder Him, extent and magnificence cannot overpower Him. By Him all things consist; and from the planets and the systems above us to the particles of dust which float upon the sunbeam—all is submitted to the guidance of His everlasting hand, and the notice of His vigilant and ever-discerning eye.

O ye men who live without God in the world, the mockery you pour on those who fear Him is nothing better than an idiot's laugh! The sins which you commit every hour, and which die away in forgetfulness from your conscience, are lost and dissipated amid the variety of other things which checker the history of this crowded universe. God sees them, and God does not forget

them. They are treasured up in the book of His remembrance; and in that day when the books are opened, you will again hear of them. In that great day of His wrath, all the elements He has formed will be the ministers of His justice; and when this earth is shaking from under you, and these heavens scowl upon you with an altered countenance, who is there among you that shall be able to stand?

The topic is inexhaustible, and I shall therefore range all my remaining observations under a third and last head. One leading ingredient of that religion which many call madness, is a fearless and consistent adherence to the language and the doctrines and the morality of the Bible. There is among all professing Christians an avowed respect for Scriptural Christianity; but this respect is no security whatever, if upon the plea of a sober and rational interpretation, every man may take to himself a license for the most unbounded deviations from the sense and spirit of the Scriptures. This way of moulding and chastening the language of the Bible, to bring it down to the standard of our previous conception, is in fact disdaining its authority. It is taking up with a religion of our own—it is resting in the sufficiency of our own fancies; and this feeling of sufficiency will carry many much farther than to the mere exercise of garbling the record. Why, they will feel an independence upon its information altogether, and they will cease to consult it. This has often given rise to a display of ignorance and temerity which on any other subject would be positively ludicrous.

In the most noted performance of the day against the vagaries of Methodism,* the laugh is often raised against an undoubted doctrine of the Bible, and what is more decisive still, the examples which are given of Methodistical nonsense, and Methodistical phraseology, are the very nonsense and the very phraseology of the New Testament. They disclaim all acquaintance with the children of light and of grace; while it is the solemn language of the Bible, that they who are not among the children of light are among the children of a world lying in wickedness; and they who are not heirs of grace and the vessels of mercy, are the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. They hold up a Christian to derision, who said that "her soul was stayed upon God." Now, although Isaiah does not promise to such peace from the world, he promises a peace which the world knoweth not:—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." But her mind was "in a most praying frame, going out of herself and taking shelter in God." I know not how obedience to an express injunction of the apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," could be more truly represented. But she felt herself "helpless as an infant, and depended upon God for all things." Paul must come in here for his share of the derision. He was not sufficient of himself—his sufficiency was of God; and he calls upon us to trust in the living God, "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." But she felt that the Lord "was waiting to be gracious." What a still higher degree of Methodism must the Christian disciples of Peter have arrived at, who actually tasted that the Lord was gracious. But the "spirit of prayer and supplication was given to her." If this process be nothing better than a fanciful chimera, the prophet who foretold it was a dreamer of dreams. He should be deposed from the canon; and the only way of being consistent would be to make the other prophets and apostles and evangelists follow him successively. But "the assurance was given to her that she was accepted in the Beloved." And yet we are told that the same thing was given to the Thessalonians, when the Gospel came to them not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. It is the constant and established way in which the assurance comes. It is always given. "You are saved by faith, and that not by yourselves, it is the gift of God." The acceptance in the Beloved may sound Methodistically in the ears of those to whom the preaching of the New Testament is foolishness; but it is

* Rev. Sydney Smith's paper on Methodism, in No. XXII. of the *Edinburgh Review*, pp. 342 and 345. The phrases commented on by Dr. Chalmers are there quoted from the Diary of a Mrs. Roberts, as given in the *Methodist Magazine*.

the very thing which the Apostle Paul and his Ephesian disciples knew themselves to be in possession of, and they gave praise to the glory of His grace wherein they had been made accepted in the Beloved. But what shall we make of their manifestations? If the manifestations of the Saviour to the soul be not a reality, then Christ is a deceiver; and the tone of truth, and of tenderness, which give all the charm of a most pathetic eloquence to His farewell address are nothing better than the artifices of a hypocrite. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Ay, and such a manifestation too, as the men of the world may well wonder at, for they have no share in it. He will manifest Himself unto His own, and not unto the world.

Now, would such men only stand on the open and declared ground of infidelity, we would be at no loss as to the kind of argument which should be brought to bear upon them; and we need be at as little loss on the ground which they have actually taken up. They avow themselves Christians, and all I ask of them is to bring their thoughts into the captivity of the obedience of Christ. We concur with them in the desire that religion were pruned of all the extravagance which has been grafted upon it; but how has this extravagance arisen? Why, by men travelling out of the record, and giving all the authority of sacredness to their own imaginations. In this way they have added to the words of this book; but is it not an equally daring invasion upon the Bible when men are found to take away from it? And if the very terms and doctrines of the Bible are held up to derision as the reveries of fanaticism, is it not a proof that these doctrines are falsified and disowned in the reveries of a spurious philosophy? Surely, if this be the message of God, all taste and imagination and science must vanish and give way before its overbearing authority! This is the great light which puts out all the lesser ones. It shines in many a conventicle, while it leaves halls and colleges in the shadow of darkness—the men whom the world call mad are walking in it, while the men whom the world call wise walk in the sparks of their own kindling. The god of this world has blinded them—he has surrounded the truth as it is in Jesus with associations of meanness and contempt. To their perverted minds he has turned the preaching of Christ into foolishness, and given to the words of truth and soberness the colouring of a visionary's dream.

This is a sad delusion; and it is woeful to think how many thousands are held in it. There is not a secular company you can go into where piety would not be laughed at as an extravagance, and where the man who is altogether a Christian would not be looked upon as having forfeited his pretensions to sense and soberness. The general tone of society is at antipodes with the tone of the New Testament; and though you were to go to the very outermost limits of lawful accommodation, you would, if sanctified by the faith that is in Jesus, stand at an unapproachable distance from the men of the world, and carry such an aspect of singularity in the whole system of your concerns, as would mark you out to be a peculiar people. This is what thousands recoil from, and they tamely surrender themselves to the influence and example of the overwhelming majority around them. They follow the multitude to do evil, and with the multitude they will perish:—"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my works in this sinful generation of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

There is only one part of the alternative which the Christian minister can press upon you—Come out from among them, and in the language of Peter to the Jewish multitude, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Then they had to sustain the persecution of violence, and now you will have to sustain the equally effective persecution of ridicule and contempt. Christ endured the contradiction of sinners, but it was for the joy that was set before Him. The same troubles await you here, but if you endure unto the end, you will share in the same triumphs hereafter. Take not up with a measured Christianity; bid adieu to all partitioning

betwixt Christ and the world. He who followeth Him must forsake all; and the work of providing for eternity is surely ample enough in its exercises, and rich enough in its rewards, to engross and to occupy the whole man. Suffer not any one thing to come into competition with it. It is only against one competitor that I have attempted to arm you—the opinion of your acquaintances—many of whom may wonder at the change; and when they see in your life and conversation the fruits meet for repentance, may denounce them in every company as the oddities of an altered man. This you may look for, and this you must brave. It is the trial of your faith; and when I take a survey of that unchristian complexion which appears so broadly and so visibly on the face of the world, I cannot but think that the Christians of the day have the very same exercise of principle to go through with the Christians of a more stormy and unsettled period. There is a greater similarity than is generally conceived—the only difference is in the species of persecution; and when I think of the many thousands who in the high flush of gallantry and honour would rather die than be affronted, I will not say that the persecution of contempt is not more tremendous than the persecution of personal violence. It will cost you nothing to be just such a Christian as the average of those around you; but to pass from the nominal indifference of the age to the entire and devoted Christianity of the New Testament, is almost as mighty a stride as to pass to it from the abominations of heathenism. Be assured that in such a cause singularity is wisdom, and a prudent accommodation to the world is madness. It is only a little while that they will have to laugh at you, or to say of any one of you, that he is beside himself. God, and eternity, and the Bible are with you, and what though the men of the world be against you? A few years will bring round your vindication; and amid the awful realities of the judgment, it will appear that the way of the derided Christian is indeed a way of truth and soberness!

SERMON XV.

*Farewell Discourses at Kilmany.**

"Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."
—HEBREWS iii. 7, 8.

BUT this is a subject on which I can expatiate no more, and you will forgive me if I should even studiously keep aloof from it in the future course of this day's services. It is a subject, the introduction of which may unfit the mind for purer and better exercises. It may distress without edifying. It may hurt the speaker; and those who are around him, while deeply affected with one of the many fluctuations of time, may in fact not be hearing for eternity. This is the higher ground to which I want to confine myself.

A man in common language is called hard-hearted who would refuse his tear and his sensibilities on an occasion like the present. But he may give way to all the excesses of tenderness, and yet be hard-hearted in the sense of my text. An object of sight may engage his every affection; and when that object is shifted away from him, he might abandon himself to the violence of grief Yet wonderful to tell, in the matters of faith, the heart of this very man might remain hard as a nether millstone.

* On the closing Sabbath of his ministry at Kilmany, July 9, 1815, Dr. Chalmers preached three short sermons—the first intended to awaken the secure—the second to direct the awakened—the third to counsel the believer. The second of these sermons, on the text Isaiah lvi. 1, 2, is omitted here, as occupied with the same topic which was insisted on in the "Address to the Inhabitants of the Parish of Kilmany." (See Works, vol. xii. p. 71.) The introductory paragraph of the first sermon, in which there was an allusion to the special circumstances of the day, I have not been able to recover, so that it opens abruptly.

Eternity with all its mighty claims upon the attention of every imperishable being might have no power to move him. The unseen God who gives him every breath might knock at his bosom by the warnings of His providence and His ministers, and it remain shut and shielded against them all. That guilt which the angels see him to be covered with he might not see nor be sensible of; and because there is nothing which the world can point its finger at—nothing which the people around him who are as spiritually blinded as himself can fasten upon him as a deformity in their eyes—he may remain unappalled when we tell him that there is a lurking sinfulness within, about which it were well if we could soften his heart, and fill it with the suspicions and alarms it has yet been a stranger to—that with all his decencies and his accomplishments he is a forgetter of God—he is alive to the world, but he is dead to the Maker of it—he is an habitual stranger to the influence of God's authority over him, and if he remain so, God will turn him into hell.

Let me, therefore, make one attempt more to pull down the strongholds of carnal security within you. I address myself to the careless and unawakened—to those who have not yet become seriously alive to the danger of their souls—to those who have never yet pressed home upon their consciences the high questions of sin and of salvation—to those who have hitherto been in the habit of spending their days as if their all were in the world, as if eternity lay far, and very far in the background of their contemplations—as if it were seen to stand at such a vast and immeasurable distance from them that it offered no immediate call upon their attention whatever; or, to speak more correctly perhaps, as if it were not seen and were not looked to at all. Yes! my brethren, there is a thick covering upon the face of these people; and it does not lie within the strength or compass of a human arm to draw aside the veil which hides from them the realities of the spiritual world. This, my brethren, I can vouch to be the result of all my little experience as a Christian minister. I feel that there is a power of resistance in human nature above the power of argument and beyond it—that something else must be brought to bear upon you than the demonstrations of human reasoning or the eloquence of a human voice—that these have all the feebleness of carnal weapons when brought into the contest with the dark and sullen and obstinate enmity of the natural mind against the things of God; that another power, mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, must be called in to aid the high service of the Christian ministry; that the man who rests his hope of success on his own might or his own wisdom puts this power away from him, and that the only right attitude for grappling it with our people is that of the apostle, who rested all his sufficiency on God, and never thought of himself but with weakness, and with fear, and with much trembling.

I desire, therefore, in what remains to throw myself upon the aids of the Spirit of God, and I shall endeavour, in the further prosecution of the subject, to soften your hearts, first, by a sense of guilt; secondly, by a sense of danger; and thirdly, by the touching argument of my text—giving you to know that the call of to-day may never be repeated—that the season of grace may not be prolonged to the uncertain morrow—and that while at this interesting now, all who hear the word of salvation and will to accept of it shall be welcome, they who put it away from them are just hardening their hearts against the solemnity of all future warnings, and that the call of another day may never be brought to bear with energy upon their consciences.

I. Harden not your hearts against a sense of your guilt—look fairly at the matter. I am sure that many, if not all of you, must be sensible that against the God who brought you into being, and keeps you in it just as long as it pleases Him, and tells you what is His will, and what is your duty—that against Him you have times and ways without number been guilty of positive and specific sins. But some, my brethren, have fewer visible transgressions than others, and they compare themselves with themselves, and thus bring their conduct to

the low standard of human estimation, and they pronounce upon themselves a very smooth and a very satisfying verdict. What then do they make of their Bible, wherein we are told that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked—that the whole world is guilty before God—that men by nature are the children of wrath, and that, unless the remedy provided in the gospel be taken and applied, it is a wrath which abideth on them? Why, my brethren, these truths are seldom looked at, and yet if they would seek a little farther into their own hearts, these truths might be made manifest to their consciences. Go not, my brethren, to deceive yourselves into a light sense of your exceeding selfishness, because the men around you have little to reproach you with. Look not to the people around you, but look to God. It is not so much this one act of sin and that other act of it which makes you a sinner in his eye. It is the whole bent of your hearts being away from Him. It is, what I am sure you must be all conscious of, my brethren, your perpetual tendency to turn every man to his own way, and to think not and care not whether God has a will and a way for you. It is the want of an habitual commitment of yourselves to His guidance. You have got your creation from Him, and many gifts and enjoyments to please you after you have been created. And how come you on with them? Why, just living as if your great end were to please yourselves, and to make yourselves happy with the gifts, and forget the giver. God had an end in your creation, but you never mind His end, and make your own end take the precedency of His altogether. When He formed His creatures He did not from that moment give up all further concern with them. He has a will for them to observe, but they follow after their own will—and only give them enough of the good things which God has provided, they are perfectly satisfied to give up all further concern with God. It is this disinclination of the heart to Him which forms the very essence and principle of their guilt—which puts the inner man into a state of rebellion—which makes one and all of us in our natural state live without God in the world, and which, under all the varieties of outward conduct—at one time monstrous, at another ordinary, at another becoming, at another amiable—constitutes us guilty of hourly and habitual disobedience against Him. Harden not your hearts against the exceeding sinfulness of all this to forget God who gives you the very things which steal your hearts away from Him—to disown Him who, were He to withdraw His supporting hand, could make you fall to pieces—to resist His pleading and entreating and remonstrating voice when He calls upon you for the glory due unto Him—to cast Him off from that ascendency over you which is surely His right—and to banish from your hearts the principle of respect unto His will, and of reverence for His character and His name.

II. Harden not your hearts against a sense of danger. When one thinks of his guilt he feels, or he ought to feel, remorse. When one thinks of his danger, he feels, or he ought to feel, alarm. There is such a thing as a determined shutting out of both these sentiments from the heart; and this is just the hardening of the text. It was by Pharaoh's heart being hardened against the terror of the awful threatenings which were sounded in his ear, that he persisted in his own infatuations, and got all these threatenings realized upon him. And this will be the result of the hardenings of your heart too, my brethren. Unless the heart of stone be taken out of you, and a heart of flesh be given, and you become soft and easily persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, those terrors will all be turned into realities. Instead of the prospect you will soon have the possession of the coming misery; and for the apprehension of God's wrath now, you will be doomed then to the dire and everlasting endurance of it. How, think you, can it be otherwise? God, your maker and your absolute proprietor, tells you what He wants you to do for Him—and the thing is not done—and He is cheated of the loyalty of His own creatures—and they walk in the counsel of their own hearts and in the sight of their own eyes—and they chalk out a line for themselves, which

they wilfully persevere in. If he had said, "I leave you to do as you like," good and well; but He has said—and has He not the right of saying—"This is the way, walk ye in it;" but no, we turn every man to his own way, and will not have God to reign over us, and cast off from us the yoke of his authority, and walk in the imagination of our own hearts—and all this in the face of God warning and pleading and threatening and telling us, in language too solemn to be treated by us with mockery, that the man who continueth not in the words of the book of His law to do them, is accursed. O, my brethren, go not to dispose lightly and easily of the warnings of God. Go not to think of Him as of a God that can be mocked or turned from His purpose.

It strikes me as an awfully emphatic description of God, when we are told of Him that he hath said it, and shall He not do it? Let us think of the solemnity and the number of His sayings directed against the children of iniquity; and let us farther think that it is enough to stamp us all the children of iniquity that our hearts are habitually away from God. What more damning iniquity than to refuse our hearts to Him who gave us them—who set them and who keeps them beating—who requires them of us in these words, "My son, give me thy heart"—and who tells that He will at last set this sin in all its sinfulness before our eyes, and bids us consider, "we that forget God, lest He tear us in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver." Be assured that the threats of God have a meaning, that the warnings of God have an accomplishment, and that there is not a single denunciation he has uttered which does not carry a terrible reality along with it. As surely, my brethren, as these bodies of yours shall be carried to the grave, so surely shall these souls of yours return to the God who gave them. There is an account to be given in. There is a day for the manifestation of God's wrath against all unrighteousness of men. There is a judgment-seat to be raised in the sight of men and of angels. There is a great convocation to be held, at which all of this world, and many of other worlds, shall be present. The angels who come in glory will not witness on that day the weakness of a degraded and an insulted God. O no, my brethren, there will be a terrible vindication of truth and justice and holiness and majesty. On that day each unreconciled sinner will mourn apart; and I call on each who now hears to look home to his own bosom—not to stifle any movement of conscience which he may feel there, but to put and to press the high question of his acceptance with God, and not to give it over till he has thoroughly sought after the way of peace, and assuredly found it. "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts."

III. And O that this prominent consideration of the text had its right influence upon you, my brethren. This is my third and my last head of discourse. Here you all are in life and in the exercise of your faculties—and what is the interesting point you occupy? Why, my brethren, there is not one of you who may not find peace with God if he will—who may not obtain eternal life if he will—who may not come to a gracious and accessible Saviour, who may not obtain mercy to pardon him, and grace to help him, if he will. All, if you will, my brethren. But you may not will to forsake all and come to Christ. You may not will to give up your evil deeds and your evil habits and return unto God, doing works meet for repentance. You may not will that that heart of yours should resign its own imaginations, and be devoted with all its affections to Him who formed and who redeemed you. You may not will to be altogether wrought upon by the constraining influence of the Saviour's love, and live no longer to yourselves but to Him who died for you, and who rose again. No; you may perhaps like better to go on in the old and wonted way, and then you just realize upon you the words of the Saviour when He said—"And this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

But O recollect, my brethren, that if this be your present state, it is not a state which it will do to die in; it is not that state which it will do to carry to

the grave with you. Here we are alive and on the face of the world. Think of the ashes of the many generations that are below you. We are surrounded by the monuments of the dead, and you are just now sitting on the dust of men of other times. In a little while, and you will lie down among them; and O how many souls which once owned these mouldering bodies would prize the opportunity of you living men. O in what lively colors do they see the folly of that desperate infatuation which hung over them during their abode in the world, and in which I call on you, my brethren, no longer to harden yourselves. Go not to say, that it is time enough. The call is to-day. Let alone till to-morrow, and what may be the consequence? Some may be dead—many will be out of the way of those arguments which I am now bringing to bear upon you. The truths you meet with here you will not so readily meet with at the business of your shops and your farms and your workhouses.

But, most impressive consideration of all, to-morrow comes, and it finds one and all of you who now resist the call still harder and more impenitent than to-day found you. You are hard indeed if you resist this day's call; but the very resistance will make you harder still. It is a mischief which grows upon you every hour. He who is proof against the solemnity of a present warning is likelier far to be proof against the solemnity of a future; and thus, my brethren, the evil grows upon you continually. Sin gains a firmer ascendency. Satan holds you more closely in his wiles; and never is the hardness of a human heart seen in more affecting colours than it often is in an old man at the brink of eternity. Hold out no longer. Feel the necessity of some great movement in the matters of religion ere you die, and begin at this moment to resolve, and to learn, and to stir yourselves in the work of going about it. I will not try any other eloquence upon such a subject than the eloquence of simplicity and affection; and I therefore conclude with urging it as my warmest, my friendliest, and most earnest adieu to you, to feel the impression of this one truth—that something must be done; and with the farewell voice of to-day, while it is called to-day, I beseech you, my dear friends, to take to the doing of it immediately.

SERMON XVI.

Farewell Discourses at Kilmany.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—Colossians ii. 6.

Nothing can be clearer from both the doctrine and examples of the New Testament, than that a man changes the course of his life on his becoming, in the true sense of the term, a Christian. There is no such thing as receiving Christ, and after that walking just as you were wont to do. Paul tells us in the beginning of this epistle, that he was thankful to God when he heard of the faith of the Colossians. In the verse preceding the text he tells us that he joyed when he beheld their order. There was a method or line of proceeding which a man who adopts the faith of Christ must necessarily observe, and it was from their observance of this method indeed that he inferred the steadfastness of their faith in Christ. There is such a thing as learning Christ differently and receiving Him differently; and according to the way in which we receive Him will be the way in which we shall feel it our duty to walk in Him. Some receive Him as a dispenser of forgiveness only, and they walk securely on in the commission of sin; others add to His former capacity that of a teacher, but overlooking the doctrine of being able to do nothing without Christ, they satisfy themselves with such decencies of conduct as they

can observe—such proprieties of civil and social life as they can act up to even on other principles than that of submission to the authority of Christ; and as for the more spiritual obedience of the devoted Christian, they make no attempt after it, but just do as they can in their own strength, and make over the mighty burden of all their deficiencies on the atonement of the Saviour.

Others again receive Him both as their Sanctifier and Saviour, and they never stop short at any one point of attainment under the feeling that they can get no farther; they do not rest satisfied with the civil and social proprieties of life under the impression that their nature is incapable of higher or larger measures of obedience. They know that the believing Christian is backed at all times by the promised aids of the Spirit of God, with the dispensation of which Christ their Saviour is intrusted, who has become Christ their Sanctifier also; and therefore, counting on this mighty accession of strength to all their endeavours, they do not strike the low aim of luke-warm decency, but they devote themselves to the obedience of the Gospel in all the extent and spirituality of its requirement—their aim is to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. From the more obvious right things which they began with, and which in my last discourse I urged you to begin with immediately—such as fidelity and plain-dealing and courteousness, and the avoiding of all that is plainly wrong, and such other moral accomplishments as the world can admire, and as worldly men with the profession of Christianity can practise, and think they do enough—I say, from all these moral accomplishments they proceed onward to higher and greater things than these. I know that at this point they are looked upon by the men that are without to have entered into the borders of fanaticism. They are abandoned by the respect and sympathy of neighbours; they are looked upon as having got into a visionary region of feelings and spiritualities and devotional sentiment; they are at one time accused of indifference to good works, not because they neglect them, but because, with every diligence in the doing of them, they aspire after still higher and better accomplishments; they are at another time charged with attempting a pitch of obedience far too strict and elevated and holy for the feeble powers of humanity, and so they readily allow it to be; but they have received Christ as the Lord their strength as well as the Lord their righteousness, and they go to Him daily upon the errand of getting power for the high achievements of a spiritual obedience, as well as upon the errand of getting pardon for those many defects of which they are most deeply and feelingly sensible; and they do not miss their errand, because they know in whom it is that they have trusted, and an actual power is made daily to rest upon them which explains the whole difference in point of attainment between them and others, and on the strength of Christ's supplies they not only outstrip their neighbours upon the ground of ordinary and familiar duties, but they are raised to an impassable distance from them; and in the high and difficult enterprise of charity and forbearance, and devotion of self and all its interests at the call of principle, and habitual sense of God and a constant habit of acting to His glory, they carry over the whole face of their history the aspect of a very peculiar people, causing the men who are without at one time to laugh and at another to wonder, and another to yield the reluctant homage of their respect and admiration.

In the prosecution of the following discourse, I shall enter more at large into the three different ways of receiving Christ, which I have rapidly glanced at in my introduction, and shall attempt to lay before you the kind of walk corresponding to each of these ways.

The first way of receiving Christ is to take Him for the single object of forgiveness; the second is to take Him both as a priest who has wrought out forgiveness, and a teacher who has prescribed a rule of life to us; and the third way is to take Him as a priest and a teacher and a sanctifier, who, in this last capacity, enables us who so receive Him as to act up to the rule of life laid down by Him as our teacher.

I. The first way of receiving Christ I take to be very common—a resting in Him for forgiveness and a wilful going on in sin at one and the same time—a taking of Him for our all-sufficient atonement, and for this object singly; and what is the walk corresponding to this view of the matter?—why, just such a walk as you may see often exemplified in zealous professors of the faith—men of declared and very ostensible orthodoxy, and who resist all admonitions to duty, just as if their resistance formed part of their creed. I am not speaking of the erroneous speculations of authors—I speak of the practical error of private Christians, and I do think it is an error to be often met with among men who have a relish for doctrine and do attend to the subject of their acceptance with God. Why, they do cultivate a determined confidence in the sufficiency of Christ for pardon, and just as if they liked to put this sufficiency to the trial, they go on contracting new sins every day, without its ever occurring to them that to make head against these sins and to cast off their dominion, formed part of their calling as the disciples of the Lord Jesus. With the exception of the single notion they have gotten from the time they became what they call orthodox, they remain just as they were.

This notion is that by determinedly trusting in Christ they will obtain the forgiveness of all their sins, and they exercise a kind of trust which quiets and satisfies them in the mean time, but in every other respect they are quite the old man—not a single vice of heart or of temper, or of conduct that does not remain in all its strength with them; and what makes the case still more hopeless, they do not seem to think that to struggle against all this forms any part of their business as Christians. Nay, they somehow or other look upon any anxiety upon these points as a thing that would spoil the entireness of their orthodoxy. It would betray a want of faith in the sufficiency of Christ; it would be an invasion upon His province by trying to do themselves what He has power enough to do for them, and will do for them if they only believe. It is to take the honour of their salvation out of His hands; and thus their remissness in practice has got a kind of principle in which they glory, and which they would think it wrong if they gave up, to rest upon. You see, then, how difficult it must be to dislodge these people out of the stronghold of security in which they have intrenched themselves, and how hard to beat them out of their indolence and their sin when being free from all anxiety on these points forms part of that very system by which they think they are doing honour to the Saviour. Their walk in all ordinary matters then will be just the same after they have so received Christ as before they received Him. There may be a change in some of those easier and more practicable things by which they think they do more direct honour to the Saviour and more openly testify their faith and their attachment to Him—such as more frequent attendance on His express ordinances—more exclusive association with people who think as they do themselves—more decided separation from those who think differently. All this is very easy, and it is acted up to; but as to gentleness in domestic life, or honesty in social life, or usefulness in public life, or any one thing which costs them a struggle with their taste or temper or inclination, this they do not look upon as forming any part of their calling; and it is grievous to think how at the very moment that they are dividing Christ, or worshipping a Christ of their own, or taking away from the Christ of the New Testament a number of his revealed characters, and shutting out from their conscience altogether the impressiveness of His solemn remonstrance—"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—it is truly grievous to think that all the time they look upon themselves as doing Him honour, and that Christ is magnified by them, in no one part of their conduct do they ever think of living to His will, but to their own.

II. But there is another class of professing Christians who are so far scandalized at the errors and abuses of those I have already noticed, as to receive Christ for a teacher as well as for an

atonement. I think I am quite sure that there is a very numerous set of people who neither discard from them the notion that Christ's death is an atonement for sin, nor the notion that Christ's will has a binding authority over the conduct of all His disciples; but who think at the same time that, as they have carried their own natural understanding to the doctrine of the atonement, and acquiesce in it, so they may carry their own natural strength to the performance of the duties, and be able to accomplish them in such a way as to secure their acceptance with God. Now, what is the effect of this? In their own strength they are able to do many things without any sense of God's will urging them to the performance at all. Is it not quite competent, for example, to a man, without any reference to Christ or religion whatever in his heart, to feel a movement of compassion at the sight of distress, and to relieve it—to feel a movement of indignation at the meanness of dishonesty, and be upright—to feel an animating glow of cordiality in the discharge of civil and friendly attentions, and be courteous—to feel all the delight of occupation in the bustle of active and useful employment, and have a public-spirited readiness to all good works?

Now, it so happens that the first days of professors are often woefully destitute of all these social accomplishments, and when urged to them by the will of Christ, they bring their wrong-headed orthodoxy in resistance to them, and bring a most lamentable discredit on the faith which they profess, by a most unlovely and revolting exhibition of all that is sour and repulsive in ordinary conduct, combined with a system of religious opinions, staunch, intolerant, flaming, and obstinately adhered to. This puts the second class upon high vantage ground, and much may be learned from what each of them is heard to say of their dislike or opposition to the other. You are men of works, say those of the first class; but we have Scripture on our side, for by faith is a man saved, and not by the works of the law. Our confidence is as much better grounded than yours as the purity of Christ's righteousness exceeds the purity of man's righteousness; and this, combined with many texts of Scripture, gives these people the appearance of some reason and a great weight of Bible authority on their side. On the other hand, Ye are men of faith, say those of the second class, and ye dislike works, and that very thing of which the Bible requires us to be zealous you discard from your system altogether. Nay, you go so far as to fasten the brand of heterodoxy on our zeal for morality; but we have Scripture on our side as well as you, and by the correctness of our conduct and the native claims of our system—which befriends virtue—on the admiration of men, we are quite sure that we are going more scripturally about the business of our religion than you who despise what the Saviour taught, and put away from you all that is practical in the writings of His apostles. This is what each can and does say to the other, and I call upon you to mark the defects of each. The first are most egregiously wrong by the want of a zealous and hearty concurrence in the duties of the Christian life, and they do not see afar off, and they forget that every true Christian is purged from his old sins; and they are blind to this truth, that to put off the deeds of the old man, and to put on the new man and his works, forms a most essential part of their calling as the disciples of the Lord Jesus. And the second are also most egregiously wrong, for they are blind to another most essential truth—they do not acknowledge their natural inability for any good thing—they profess to receive Christ as their teacher, but it is only as a teacher of those things which they can do without him strengthening them—they strike the low aim of such duties and such accomplishments as man can arrive at by his own strength—they may and they do admit the use of Christ as an atonement, for they allow that they have their infirmities, and that He by His death wrought out an expiation for them; but they do not seem to think that there is any use for Christ as a purifier of a degenerate world from that corruption which the world cannot, with all the force of its natural principles, shake off. There is one sense in which they allow Him to be the purifier

and that is by the tendency of His sublime and excellent precepts to reform and exalt and purify the whole man. And so they would if they were obeyed. But here lies the very point of their defectiveness. They think it is enough if they just yield such an obedience to the precepts and such a conformity to the example of Christ as they find themselves able to compass and to make out in their own strength. They are blind to the truth, that in order to these precepts taking effect upon them, there must not merely be a voice without—calling upon them to do, but a power within—enabling them to perform. Now, this power is not in them by nature; and they think it enough if they just yield such a degree of obedience as nature can accomplish, or, in other words, no spiritual obedience at all. The power must be put in them by grace, and must be earnestly prayed for, and must go along with every one exercise of duty, and thus it is that Christ acts as the purifier of a corrupt and degenerate world, not merely by the delivery of excellent rules, but by the dispensation of strength for acting up to them. And these men who feel not the necessity of this strength—why, they will often be more decent and orderly and kind and upright and honourable than their neighbours around them.

There are natural principles in the constitution of man which secure a certain measure of all these virtues in many individuals of the race; but as to that obedience which no other strength but the might conferred by the Spirit on the inner man can accomplish—the obedience of the heart—the obedience of love to God—the obedience of self-devotion and self-denial—the obedience of not being conformed to the world, and the setting our every affection on the things which are above—the obedience to which the constraining love of Christ can alone prompt us, and which the grace of Christ can alone enable us to yield, even that of living no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and who rose again—why, my brethren, this is an obedience which with all their decencies and proprieties, they never think of aspiring after—this is an obedience, the very attempt at which many would deride as fanatical and visionary and enthusiastic. This is an obedience which the first class put away from them; for, occupied as they are with the single sentiment of dependence on the righteousness of Christ, they are for no personal obedience of their own at all. And this is an obedience which the second class equally put away from them, for there is a something else at which they stop short and with which they rest satisfied—even that humble measure of decency and propriety and social virtue and civil accomplishment which any man of any fortune and good education can attain, though he never apply for the strengthening influence of the Spirit, nor pray in the name of Christ, nor avail himself of that peculiar provision which the Gospel has instituted for redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying us unto the Son of God a peculiar people zealous of good works.

With both the one and the other of these classes, there is a something which stands in the way of their vigorously pursuing that line of new and spiritual obedience which every honest Christian aims sincerely to make progress in. With the first, it is the sentiment that Christ has already wrought out a righteousness for them—and it is true that He has wrought out a righteousness for them who believe; but how can they be said to believe if they put not faith in all His sayings, and if one of the most solemn and authoritative of these sayings, "Without holiness no man shall see God," has no impression upon them. With the second class, it is the sentiment that no more obedience can be exacted from me than that which I can yield; and thus while Paul says our salvation must be altogether of works or altogether of grace, they eke out what is wanting in the one by what they have done in the other, and as there is no saying with how small a portion of each they will satisfy themselves, their obedience will be no more than the strength of nature can yield—that nature which the Bible tells us is corrupt and alienated from God.

III. But it is not enough that you receive Christ for the single object of forgiveness, or as a priest who has

wrought out an atonement for you; for Christ offers himself in more capacities than this one, and you do not receive Him truly unless you receive Him just as he offers Himself. Again, it is not enough that you receive Christ only as a priest and a prophet; for all that He teaches will be to you a dead letter unless you are qualified to understand and to obey it; and if you think that you are qualified by nature, you in fact refuse His teaching at the very time that you profess Him to be your teacher, for He says, "Without me ye can do nothing." You must receive Him for strength as well as for forgiveness and direction; or, in other words, you must submit to Him as your King, not merely to rule over you by His law, but to rule in you by His Spirit. You must live in constant dependence on the influences of His grace, and if you do so, you never will stop short at any one point of obedience, but knowing that the grace of God is all-powerful, you will suffer no difficulties to stop your progress; you will suffer no paltry limit of what unaided human nature can do, to bound your ambition after the glories of a purer and a better character than any earthly principle can accomplish; you will enter a career, of which you at this moment see not the end; you will try an ascent of which the lofty eminence is hid in the darkness of futurity; the chilling sentiment that no higher obedience is expected of you, than of yourself you can yield, will have no influence upon you, for the mighty stretch of attainment that you look forward to, is not what you can do, but what Christ can do in you; and with the all-subduing instrument of His grace to help you through every difficulty, and to carry you in triumph over every opposition, you will press forward conquering and to conquer; and while the world knoweth not the power of those great and animating hopes which sustain you, you will be making daily progress in a field of discipline and acquirement which they have never entered; and in patience and forgiveness, and gentleness and charity, and the love of God and the love of your neighbour—which is like unto the love of God, you will prove that a work of grace is going on in your hearts, even that work by which the image you lost at the fall is repaired and brought back again—the empire of sin within you is overthrown—the subjection of your hearts to what is visible and earthly is exchanged for the power of the unseen world over its every affection—and you are filled with such a faith, and such a love, and such a superiority to perishable things, as will shed a glory over the whole of your daily walk, and give to every one of your doings the high character of a candidate for eternity.

Christ is offered to all of you for forgiveness. The man who takes Him for this single object must be looking at Him with an eye half-shut upon the revelation He makes of Himself. Look at Him with an open and a steadfast eye, and then I will call you a true believer; and sure I am, that if you do so, you cannot avoid seeing Him in the earnestness of His desire that you should give up all sin, and enter from this moment into all obedience. True, and most true, my brethren, that faith will save you; but it must be a whole faith in a whole Bible. True, and most true, that they who keep the commandments of Jesus shall enter into life; but you are not to shrink from any one of these commandments, or to say, because they are so much above the power of humanity, that you must give up the task of attempting them. True, and most true, that he who trusteth to his obedience as a Saviour, is shifting his confidence from the alone foundation it can rest upon. Christ is your Saviour; and when I call upon you to rejoice in that reconciliation which is through Him, I call upon you not to leave Him for a single moment, when you engage in the work of doing those things which, if left undone, will exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. Take Him along with you into all your services. Let this sentiment ever be upon you,—What I am now doing I may do in my own strength to the satisfaction of man; but I must have the power of Christ resting upon the performance, if I wish to do it in the way that is acceptable to God. Let this be your habitual sentiment, and then the supposed opposition between faith and works vanishes into nothing. The life of a believer is made up of good works;

and faith is the animating and the power-working principle of every one of them. The spirit of Christ actuates and sustains the whole course of your obedience. You walk not away from Him, but, in the language of the text, you "walk in him;" and as there is not one of your doings in which He does not feel a concern, and prescribe for you a duty, so there is not one of them in which His grace is not in readiness to put the right principle into your heart, and to bring it out into your conduct, and to make your walk accord with your profession, so as to let the world see upon you without, the power and the efficacy of the sentiment within; and thus, while Christ has the whole merit of your forgiveness, he has also the whole merit of your sanctification; and the humble and deeply-felt consciousness of "Nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me," restores to Jesus Christ all the credit and all the glory which belong to Him, by making Him your only, and your perfect, and your entire, and your altogether Saviour.

Choose Him, then, my brethren, choose Him as the Captain of your salvation. Let him enter into your hearts by faith, and let him dwell continually there. Cultivate a daily intercourse and a growing acquaintance with Him. O, you are in safe company, indeed, when your fellowship is with Him? The shield of His protecting mediatorship is ever between you and the justice of God; and out of His fulness there goeth a constant stream, to nourish, and to animate, and to strengthen every believer. Why should the shifting of human instruments so oppress and so discourage you, when He is your willing friend; when He is ever present, and is at all times in readiness; when He, the same to-day, yesterday, and forever, is to be met with in every place; and while His disciples here, giving way to the power of sight, are sorrowful, and in great heaviness, because they are to move at a distance from one another, He, my brethren, has His eye upon all neighbourhoods and all countries, and will at length gather His disciples into one eternal family? With such a Master let us quit ourselves like men. With the magnificence of eternity before us, let time, with all its fluctuations, dwindle into its own littleness. If God is pleased to spare me, I trust I shall often meet with you in person, even on this side of the grave; but if not, let us often meet in prayer at the mercy-seat of God. While we occupy different places on earth, let our mutual intercessions for each other go to one place in heaven. Let the Saviour put our supplications into one censer; and be assured, my brethren, that after the dear and much-loved scenery of this peaceful vale has disappeared from my eye, the people who live in it shall retain a warm and an ever-during place in my memory;—and this mortal body must be stretched on the bed of death, ere the heart which now animates it can resign its exercise of longing after you, and praying for you, that you may so receive Christ Jesus, and so walk in Him, and so hold fast the things you have gotten, and so prove that the labour I have had amongst you has not been in vain; that when the sound of the last trumpet awakens us, those eyes which are now bathed in tears may open upon a scene of eternal blessedness, and we, my brethren, whom the providence of God has withdrawn for a little while from one another, may on that day be found side by side at the right hand of the everlasting throne.

SERMON XVII.

*The Right Fear and the Right Faith.**

"That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear."—LUKE i. 74.

WE have already spoken of that fear which has God for its direct and personal object, and regarding which the Bible appears to exhibit a set of contradictory passages that we have endeavoured to reconcile. But there is another fear distinct from that which we entertain towards God as a person, though it stands connected with one of the fixed and irreversible ordinations of His government—even that by which the holiness of man in time is made indispensable to his happiness in eternity. This must be admitted by a Christian disciple, even after he, by the faith of the gospel, has entered into reconciliation with God, and so exchanged the fear of terror for the fear of reverence. There is a host of scriptural testimonies to the necessity of holiness, which no fair inquirer into the truth as it is in Jesus can possibly withstand; and indeed the very same faith in the general veracity of the Bible which leads to the assurance of an efficacy in the blood of Jesus to deliver from the punishment of sin, leads co-ordinately to the assurance that without deliverance also from the power of sin there is no meetness for heaven, and can be no entrance into the delight or the glory of its everlasting habitations. Now the fear is lest we should fall short of this heaven just by falling short of this holiness—a fear which remains, and ought to remain with you, even after having accepted of Christ as your Saviour. "Let us therefore fear," says the apostle, "lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest any of you should seem to come short of it." He states before what the grounds were of such an apprehension. One of them is an evil heart—"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Another of them is the insidious power of sin—"Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And in support of this very lesson of heedfulness and fear he quotes in another place the instances of those who, after having performed to all appearance their great and initiatory act of reconciliation with God, fell away, and were destroyed of Him. They, he tells us, who were baptized unto Moses, and ate and drank of that spiritual Rock, that was Christ—even with those of them who suffered themselves to be overcome by temptation, God was not well pleased, and overthrew them in the wilderness. And these things are written for our admonition—for in like manner still may we be overthrown; "wherefore," he concludes, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Now the things which move us, and which should move us to fear, are the likelihoods of such a fall whereby we are surrounded. All nature and experience might well minister to our apprehensions upon this subject. Did we but think of our hearts, and of their constant and cleaving ungodliness—did we look back upon our history, and reflect how little it has been guided by the principle, or adorned by the fruits of new obedience—did we take account of our affections, and of their still abiding earthliness, so like unto that carnality wherewith the Bible has associated death—did we even take account of our doings, according to which we shall either be received or rejected at the judgment seat of Christ—did we but estimate aright our constitutional facilities to what is evil, our leaden, our

* In September, 1815, a series of sermons was preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow, on the text, Luke i. 74. One of them, devoted to the drawing out of the distinction between the fear of terror and the fear of reverence, was moulded afterwards into the form in which it is presented in Dr. Chalmers' Works, *ante*, p. 166. The substance of the succeeding sermon is given in the discourse which follows.

lethargic apathy to what is good—did we make sound and true computation of the strength of our enemies, the sinful tempers and passions and sensualities which are within, meeting at every turn their appropriate objects from without, and plied, most closely and urgently plied on all hands by the importunities of a besetting world—did we only take a just cognizance of these things, then by the very prevalence of sight and of sense over faith, we, if at all in earnest about the matter, must feel alarmed by the fearful chances of an arrest and an overthrow on that course of progressive holiness which is the alone way whereby we can make good our escape from the horrors of an undone eternity. Were we, in the language of Zacharias, wholly delivered from the hands of those enemies, then might we serve God *without* fear in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of our life; but just because all our life long we are encompassed by those enemies, the apostle Paul tells us to "work out our salvation *with* fear and trembling;" and just because while we sojourn in the flesh they do continue to solicit and to annoy us, the apostle Peter tells us to "pass the time of our sojourning here *in* fear."

Now, it may help us to resolve this apparent contrariety if we compare two passages in the life of the last mentioned apostle, and from which we shall determine, I think, what the fear is which we ought to cast away, and what the fear which we ought to cherish and retain. Peter was, upon one occasion, asked by our Saviour to come to Him as He walked upon the sea. He obeyed; but no sooner did he venture himself upon the water than his heart gave way. He knew that he could not walk there in his own strength, and that unless buoyed up by a miraculous power he would sink to the bottom and perish. Now faith in the miraculous power of Him whom he had every reason to trust was the very thing which should have supported his intrepidity; but this faith he wanted, and so he was afraid, and drew this rebuke upon himself—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here Peter sinned in that he feared, because his was at this time a fear opposed to faith in the power and kindness of the Saviour.

Go now to another passage of his life—when he strongly asserted, in the hearing of his Master, that he never would deny Him—confident that though all the rest of the disciples should be baffled and give way, he would meet the coming temptation like a man, and that like a man he would conquer it. Now, on what ground did he feel a confidence so fearless? Did he calculate on strength from his Master to support him? No! had he rested his confidence on this he would not have disgraced himself; but he evidently spoke in the tone of a man who counted on his own strength—of a man conscious that within him there was a firmness of principle altogether competent of itself for the struggle that was approaching. It had been well if, looking to the power and promise of the Saviour, he had felt fearless; but all the fearlessness that he felt was on looking to himself and to the energy of his own purposes—and therefore it was that as in the former instance he sinned in having feared, so in the present instance he sinned in having not feared. Had he been more distrustful of himself, more aware of the inadequacy of his own strength to meet the coming trial and to conquer it, he would have feared, and feared on the right ground. Had this fear clothed him with humility, and caused him to transfer his dependence from himself unto the Saviour, he would have been courageous, and courageous on the right ground—and it were a confidence that would not have been put to shame, for then would he have been in the way of the promise—that the God who resisteth the proud giveth grace unto the humble.

The history of this apostle after the resurrection illustrates the matter still more. It is quite palpable that he then underwent a great moral transformation, and conducted himself with a decision and an energy before unknown to him—preaching the word with all boldness, and, with only one recorded exception, doing the whole work of an apostle in a way the most firm and unfaltering—insomuch that, faithful to his dangerous

commission, he kept by it in the face of imprisonments and persecutions, and at length closed an honourable life by the agonies of a painful martyrdom. Now, what was it that caused this revolution? What new and better principle was that which seems now to have sustained him. Be assured that it consisted in his now fearing on the right ground, and in his having faith on the right ground. He feared when and where it was proper; and he feared not when and where it was proper. When, on looking to the trials that beset or that awaited him, he measured them with his own strength, then he had the fear—when he measured them with the strength of the Lord Jesus, then he had the faith. In a word, he put no confidence in himself, knowing that in himself, that is, in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing—he put all his confidence in the Saviour, knowing that he could do all things through Christ strengthening him. And so the confidence which he expressed after the resurrection differed exceedingly from the confidence which he felt before it. "Think not," he said, after the achievement of a wondrous miracle, "that by our own power or holiness we have done this thing; it is in the name of Christ, and by faith in His name, and through the faith which is by Him, that we have been enabled to do this thing in the presence of you all."

Now, this mixture of fear in reference to the weakness of one's self, and of faith in reference to the power and promise of God, both acting contemporaneously together, might appear a mystery in your eyes. You may feel a difficulty in conceiving what the posture of the mind can be when thus acted upon—or how it is that two principles so opposite in their nature should exist in the heart at the same time, and bear at once upon the mechanism of the human spirit. At first sight it may not be clear to you by what sort of moral dynamics, or by what composition of forces it is that the mind, when thus under two impulses, betakes itself to the one right and determinate path. You must admit the great practical importance of the question, affecting as it does the whole habit and history of a believer—and you will therefore excuse us if, in our attempts at explicitness, we shall not be disdainful even of the very homeliest illustrations.

Our first illustration is taken from infancy—when the child makes its first attempts to walk. Here the two principles are working together at the same moment—first, a fearfulness, in virtue of which it will not let go the hold of its nurse's hand; and secondly, a confidence, that while keeping its hold firmly it will be supported and in safety during its whole adventure across the floor. Fear on the one hand, and faith on the other, are both in operation, and both necessary. Extinguish the principle of fear altogether, and the child committing itself too early to its own strength, will inevitably fall. Extinguish the principle of faith altogether, and the child having no confidence even in the effectual support held out by the hands of its attendant, might never attempt the exercise of walking, and so remain in impotency all its days. And thus the mingled operation of these two principles so far from being that recondite, that unpractical thing which people alike unobservant of the Bible and of human nature regard it to be, is a thing of current and most obvious exemplification in the experience of every family.

Should our second illustration be now deemed utterly superfluous, and perhaps even nauseated, as you would the insipidity of any overdone excess—we must still plead the magnitude of the lesson, and our urgent feeling of that magnitude. I may be conscious of inability to swim across a river, and nevertheless commit myself fearlessly to its waters, should a rope be handed out to me from the vessel that is passing over it. Here, too, we have the joint operation of both principles:—Fear in reference to my own power of self-support restrains me from letting go my hold—faith in the strength and tightness of the rope, gives me a feeling of perfect security while I retain my hold. Both principles, however opposite in their nature, incline me to the one thing of keeping firmly and constantly by the rope. Were I confident that I had no need of it, I might fling it indignantly away from me, and should my confidence be presumption, I might sink to the bottom and perish. But I

fear, and therefore keep by it as my only dependence. Were I fearful of the rope's strength, and trembled lest when I took my hold of it, it should break or separate from the vessel, I might refuse its aid, and rather keep my hands in the exercise of swimming. Give me the right fear—that is a fearful sense of my own weakness and inability to swim; and the right faith—that is a faith in the perfect security of the rope which I hold by; and these principles, so far from contravening each other, do in fact conspire to the one result of making me cleave with full purpose of heart to that only support by which I can be carried fearlessly through the river, and brought in safety to the other side of it.

And it is just by such a fear and by such a faith that we make our way into heaven across the troubled sea of this world. These two are not distracting forces which draw in opposite ways. The one verily shuts up into the other. It is just when we look abroad upon the adverse influences of sense and of society, and then bethink ourselves of our own utter inadequacy to cope with them—it is when admonished by inward experience of our constant tendency to relinquish all dependence and all desire towards God—it is the frequent obscuration of Him in our own spirits, that sublimed although they may have somewhat been, in hours of stillness and seclusion, to the ethereal brightness of the upper regions, yet that ever and anon on our return, whether to the world's business or to the world's companies, they lapse again into earthliness. and grovel there—it is this perpetual finding, that however able to maintain in conduct those equities of action amongst our fellows which belong to the virtue of righteousness, yet that we utterly and throughout every hour of our lives fail in those sanctities of affection towards God which constitute the virtue of holiness—these are the experiences which must at length school every honest inquirer into an utter fearfulness of himself, a distrust, a most warrantable and well-founded distrust in all the resources of his own strength and of his own wisdom. It is this often-tried and as often ascertained deficiency of nature, which reconciles him to the doctrine of a grace that might put strength into nature for the whole work and warfare of obedience. Looking to the impotency of the one, there is fear; looking to the sufficiency of the other, there is faith. Both are salutary. In virtue of the first, he has a perpetual distrust in himself; in virtue of the second, he has a perpetual dependence on the Lord Jesus. There is no conflict between these feelings—they work, as it were, to one another's hands. The movement to which they give rise is first an export of prayer from the soul to heaven's sanctuary; and secondly, an import of power from heaven's sanctuary into the soul. It is this habitual sense of weakness which excites to habitual prayer—it is this habitual prayer which brings down the habitual supplies of strength and of grace for all services. The man works mightily because God works in him mightily. He realizes the great paradox of the Christian life, that when he is weak then he is strong; that when deepest in humility he is borne most steadfastly upward and onward along the heights of an angelic sacredness.

These views are in full harmony with Scripture; and did we but take along with us what that is which we should feel fear about, and again, what that is which we should put faith in, we could be at no loss to understand either how the psalmist could mix trembling with his mirth, or how the apostle could be always sorrowful yet always rejoicing. "When I said, my foot slippeth," saith David, "thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." On looking to one quarter, even to that of sense and nature, we might well tremble before those adverse influences by which the heart of man is wholly secularized, and his history becomes that of an earthly, carnal, and alienated creature. On looking to the other quarter, even to that where the fulness of grace is treasured up, and whence it issues forth on the praying and the watching and the working disciple—it might well rejoice in those precious influences from heaven by which the heart of man is impregnated with its own sacredness, and his history becomes that of a prosperous aspirant after its glory and immortality and honour

Could he, without any hold on the support that is above him, make his own way on the ascent of a progressive holiness, then he need not tremble; or even were it quite natural for him to keep that hold at all times, then might he persist in a sort of unbroken and undisturbed security of heart, while the temptations of life play idly around him. But, in point of truth, there is a constant aptitude to let go the hold, and every intelligent Christian is conscious thereof, and so he is kept, and that perpetually, on the alert and the alarm—fearful, on the one hand that he should quit his dependence, and confident, on the other, that so long as he retains it he is safe. You can imagine the light and evidence wherewith the sacred volume stands forth to the eye of a believer, when made to observe how precisely the descriptions of the Bible accord with all the developments of an experience so very peculiar. When called upon to fear—as in the first verse of the fourth chapter of the Hebrews—lest he should come short of the promised rest, he knows well what that is which should make him afraid. But this very fear, founded on a distrust of his own powers, shuts him up unto another dependence—and when called upon in the last verse of the same chapter, to come boldly to the throne of grace, that he may find grace to help him in the time of need, he knows well what that is which should make him courageous.

This delicate alternation between the two feelings, so often adverted to in the Bible, and so accurately reflected in the personal history of a believer, affords that very correspondence between the tablet of human nature on the one hand, and the tablet of revelation on the other, which warrants a still more intimate conviction than before of God being the common author or architect of both. Meanwhile, too, he practises the lesson of serving God both without fear and with fear—without fear on the calculation that he makes of God's promises—with fear on the calculation he makes of his own powers. The sense of his own helplessness will make him fearful of depending upon it. The sense of God's truth in the promises will make him faithful in depending upon it. The faith and the fear are embodied by him into one act of obedience, even as within the limits of a single verse they have been embodied by the apostle into one precept. He tells the Gentiles not to boast themselves against the children of Israel;—and why? because it was by faith only that they stood—"And be not therefore," he says, "high-minded, but fear." Here, and within the compass of one utterance, the right fear and the right faith are both contemporaneously pressed upon them. The right fear would keep them from boasting, allied as it was with the sentiment that although they stood it was by no power or holiness of their own. The right faith would direct their eye to that fountain of grace which was above them, and whence thy drew those supplies of light and of strength, which from the unbelieving Jews had been withholden, and as they looked to that God who alone made them to differ, they would not be high-minded.

But the most complete scriptural illustration of this doctrine which can be given, is from that celebrated passage where the apostle tells his converts to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is conceivable how a man should both will aright and work aright in virtue of an influence from heaven, and how, to obtain this influence, a prayer should arise from the heart, and a power should come down both upon the heart and upon the hand for all the services of a vigorous and an active obedience. But why should there be a fear or trembling in this process? The fear is lest among the besetting urgencies of sense and of nature, we should be tempted to forget God, and so He should withdraw His helping hand from us. The fear is lest, in the confidence of nature, we should go forth against the adverse influences by which we are surrounded, and so be overcome. The fear is lest we should lose our hold of God, and so He, quitting His hold of us, and abandoning us to our own unaided impotency, should leave us to the disgrace and the ruin of a fatal overthrow. The

fear is lest, not praying as we ought, we should be deprived of the needful element for right and acceptable performance; and, most important of all, the fear is lest, not performing as we ought, we should provoke God to withhold His answers of grace and of graciousness from our prayers. It is this last which harmonizes man's utmost activity with man's utmost dependence. This is the state of it: he does all that he can with the strength which he now has, and he looks to God for that strength being kept up and extended. He knows that if he do not work up to the power which is at present in him, that power will not be added to, and what is more, that even such as it is, it may be withdrawn. He knows that if he do not trade with all diligence on the actual stock of grace, this stock will be actually diminished. Whatever, therefore, in the way of duty or of service, his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with all his existing might, lest deserted in wrath by the sustaining might of God, he should not only be arrested in his progress towards the strength and the stature of a more advanced Christianity, but should decline into the utter impotency of one who is altogether without grace and without godliness. It is precisely because God worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure, that he fears lest that good pleasure should be forfeited in the time that is to come by his careless and remiss improvement of all which it has done for him in the time that now is. The precise reason why so strenuous and so busy and so much on the alert in stirring up and putting to its practical use the gift that is in him, is, that if he do not he will receive no more gifts, and what he has will be taken away.

A more plain and also more powerful incitement to all diligence, and that throughout every single instant of his course, cannot well be conceived than that if he do not at this instant work to the uttermost of that ability wherewith the Spirit has now invested him, the Spirit will be grieved, and may, on the very next instant, abandon him to his own unsupported feebleness. The relation between the hand that works and the hand by which it is strengthened, furnishes the very strongest, and at the same time most intelligible motive to steady, faithful, and enduring obedience. The man works out his salvation upon the strength of what God has wrought into him; and he does it with fear and trembling, just because most fearfully and tremblingly alive to the thought, that if he does not, God may cease working in him to will any more or to do any more. The doctrine of grace, thus understood, so far from acting as an extinguisher upon human activity, is in truth the very best excitement to it. This dependence between the busy exercise of all your present graces and the supply of new, is the fittest possible tenure on the part of God whereby to hold man to his most constant, most careful, most vigilant obedience. It is felt that the only way of obtaining enlargement and vigour for future services, is to acquit one's self to the uttermost of his present strength of all his present services; and that thus, and thus alone, he can step by step work his ascending way to a higher and a higher status in practical Christianity. We are aware of the reproach that has been cast on the doctrine of the Spirit's influences; but we trust it will be seen from these views, however imperfectly given, that he who labours in all the present might given, and looks for more, instead of living in the mystic state of an indolent and expectant quietism, he of all other men is the most awake to every call of duty—the most painstaking and arduous in every performance of it.

There is nothing in that mercy which descends upon us from heaven to supersede the activities of men upon earth. Instead of superseding, its very design is to stimulate these activities. When it works in us, its precise outgoing is just to set us working. Had it operated by an outward or physical constraint upon the hand, then might it only have worked on us to do. But it operates on the inner man, and so as to gain the consent of the heart; and accordingly works in us both to will and to do. It acts in truth by the influence of moral suasion, and addresses itself to the various parts and principles of our moral nature. The man instead of being

driven by a force from without, is really and in substance under the government of his own feelings—but these are feelings capable it would appear of being refined and elevated by the influence of that supreme virtue which is above us, even as we experimentally know that they are capable of being refined and elevated by the influence of that social virtue which beams upon us from the companionship of a good and well-principled society around us. At all events, the thing is misunderstood if you conceive of him who has been quickened into action by a touch from the upper sanctuary, that he is therefore set aside from the exertion of his own powers, and the guidance or the control of his own purposes. The visitation, in fact, is upon the inward powers and sensibilities, not of a dead but of a living mechanism, and the effect of it is not to overbear any of the proper functions of the man, but to set all his powers and purposes and inward principles in action. Accordingly, in our text, the effect of God's having visited and redeemed His people, is that His people serve Him. Upholden though they be and led although they be by the hand stretched forth to meet them from heaven, it is a hand not of impulse upon matter but of application to mind, and which acts on that mind in sweetest unison with all its faculties, insomuch that these children of grace, instead of idly waiting in the anticipation of what is to come, are most strenuously and laboriously working under the ascendency of a moral force that is present, and which bears upon the heart as well as on the hand. We deceive ourselves then if we think that under the economy of the Gospel we are exempted from the assiduities of service; and although we shall never move aright unless breathed upon by an influence from above, yet he only has indeed partaken of that influence who, in practical deference to the authority of God as his Master, holds forth in the history of his life the aspect of a willing and a doing and a stirring and a pains-taking obedience.

SERMON XVIII.

*Spiritual Idolatry.**

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 CORINTHIANS vi. 17, 18.

You will observe that Paul in these verses is addressing a number of professed Christians, who were surrounded with the allurements of idolatry. There was a power of temptation in these allurements greater than they have ever thought of to whom the profligacies of the pagan worship are unknown; but the apostle, whose converts lived in the midst of them, was aware of the constant vigilance they would have to maintain among the constant opportunities and solicitations which beset them in every quarter. He watched over them with a godly jealousy. He feared for them even to painfulness. His apprehension was that he would again lose them; and, aware of the danger that lay even in their most distant approaches to the objects of that enticing ritual, he insists on a clean and total separation. It is under a feeling of the hazard to which they were exposed that he calls upon them, in a former epistle, to beware of security: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." It is with a reference to the very same subject that he calls upon them to beware also of a despairing sense of helplessness, under the force of these surrounding temptations. He commits them to the faithfulness of God. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men; but God is faithful, who

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will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." And having thus put them into the right attitude for resisting temptation, or, in other words, having on the one hand given them the right fear, that is, a fear of themselves, in virtue of which they would take heed—and the right faith, that is, faith in God, in virtue of which they would receive the fulfilment of His promises—he makes the whole to bear on the great practical object that he had in his eye, and proves the deep impression of his mind on the subject of idolatry and of its dangers, when, after furnishing them with the right answer, and putting them into the right attitude of resistance, he winds up the whole argument by saying, Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

But how can such a lesson as this be made to bear upon the professing Christians of the present day? Just by making idolatry what, spiritually and substantially speaking, it really is, giving the desires of the heart to any one object which can seduce it from the love of God. If any one thing be more loved than He, that one thing is an idol. The heart which followeth after its uncleanness is engaged in the worship of an idol. The man whose heart is in his wealth, and not in the living God, is virtually as much an idolater, as if he made an image of his gold, and fell down on his knees to an idol. The man of the present day, who, the slave of ungovernable desire, indulges in the abominations of licentiousness, ranks, in the spiritual estimation of Heaven, with the bacchanalian of old, who personified pleasure, and made an image with his hands to represent the image of his fancy, and shared in all the mysteries which were thrown around the service of the idol. Even the good-humoured and convivial man, whose ruling enjoyment is his table, and whom the world can charge with no other species of profligacy—had he been one of Paul's converts, Paul would have wept over him, and charged him with making a god of his enjoyment, and the mind of the holy apostle would have felt his apostasy even to the bitterness of tears, and have told it even weeping that he had become an enemy of the Cross of Christ, and had relapsed from the worship of the one God to the worship of an idol. Ye purer and gentler of our kind, who love to surround yourselves with all the elegancies which wealth can purchase, I will not say, when I enter your apartments and survey the tastefulness and the splendour which adorn them, that you have done that which is unlawful, but I think that, had Paul looked at the costly exhibition, he would have said, with all the delicacy and discernment which belonged to him, that though all things be lawful, yet all things are not expedient; and if the desire of the eye, or the pride of life, which are opposite to the love of the Father, be the ruling principle within you, then in every act of extravagance at the shrine of fashion do I recognize an offering of idolatry—an act of graceful adoration before the painted magnificence and the high-wrought drapery of an idol. But the work of illustration is endless. Every one creature that is more loved than the Creator is an idol. If any one thing which He has formed occupy the place in our hearts which belongs to Him who formed all things, that one thing is an idol. Oh! how widely does such a principle as this spread around the charge of rebellion among all the classes and characters of society. How broadly it stamps upon the face of the world the legible expression of a world lying in wickedness. When we see every man giving himself up to his own peculiar idolatry, how it realizes the description of the prophet, that we have turned every one to his own way; and surely, when, under all the vanities of selfish indulgence—from all the grossness of profligacy to all the elegance of refinement, we can detect the one, and the universal tendency of forgetfulness of God, we cannot fail to acknowledge that the world of sense which is around us is one mighty theatre of idolatry; that on every side of us idols meet us and ply us with their temptations; that they have stolen our affections from God as entirely as the idols of Corinth seduced the worshippers of that abandoned city from the true God of heaven and of earth; and that, therefore, the

call of the apostle is unto us as well as unto them, when he tells us of God claiming the honour that is due unto His name, and recalling His wandering creatures to their allegiance, and bidding them give up their idols, saying, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, saith the Lord."

Let me take each of these clauses in the order in which they stand, and endeavour practically to apply them to the men of the present day.

"Come out from among them."—A plain enough direction, if you conceive a man standing in one of the temples of idolatry. It is just telling him to turn his back upon the idols, and to walk away from them; but if you take in the next clause of the apostle's advice, "be ye separate," you connect with the act of leaving these idols the purpose of never returning to them. My object in going away is to keep away. With the individual act of the time that is present there is also the general determination, which, if persisted in, carries an authority over my conduct in all time coming. Obedience to the direction, "Come out from among them," may be performed by a man who, though he forbears one act of idolatry, intends no renunciation of the habits of idolatry. Obedience to the direction of—Come out from among them, and be ye separate. involves in it not merely an act of refusal to join in the service of idols, but it makes the one act the commencement of a purposed course. It is by the control of the mind over the body that the one performance of moving away from an idolatrous temple is accomplished; but the mind can look forward to futurity, and by a present act of volition it can exert a control over the movements of futurity. A purpose may be suggested in a moment; it may be deliberated upon and formed in less than an hour. It may be so matured by the power of reflection sitting in authority over the great questions of duty and interest, as to obtain a vested and decisive establishment over the mind in a single day. In another day it may compel the outer man to an act of obedience, and this may be followed by another, and the purpose may gather new strength from every new and successful exertion of sovereignty, and it may be getting constant additions to its practical ascendency over the whole man, and thus from the suggestion of a single moment there may arise, as from a starting-point. an emanating influence which gives a new direction to his doings, and imparts a new colour to the whole train of his history.

This gives an importance to the business of the pulpit which, to him who fills it, is enough to humble and to overwhelm him. The thousand individuals he stands among, if they remain what nature made them, have turned every one of them to his own way. and each is in full pursuit of his own fancied idolatry. Oh! how shall he shape the suggestion that is to bear with effect on all or on any of them; that is, to arrest the currency of nature. and to turn these wanderers unto God. Oh! there is an obstinacy of corruption amongst us which mocks the impotency of human arguments; a spell in the enchantments of sense and of time which no charm of eloquence can dissolve; a tyranny in the idols of the world against which all the demonstrations of wisdom and all the entreaties of human tenderness have no more effect than the lispings of infancy. A minister has no ground to hope for fruit from his exertions until in himself he has no hope; until he has learned to put no faith in the point and energy of sentences; until he feel that a man may be mighty to compel the attention, and mighty to regale the imagination, and mighty to silence the gainsayers, and yet not mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. Oh! there is a power of resistance in the alienated children of this world which is beyond every power that accomplished or educated nature can bring to bear upon it; and it is not till he throw himself in humble dependence on his great Master, who alone can subdue all things unto Himself, that he need expect to be the honoured instrument of breaking down the infatuation which chains every brother of the species in the most helpless and degrading idolatry.

But to give these two clauses of

"Come out from among them," and "be ye separate," their general application, I would observe, in the first place, that the renunciation you are called upon to perform is not of this one or of that other idol, but of all idols. It is to come out from among *them*. There is not one of them in the service of which you do not trespass on some of the commandments; and there is not one of them the love of which does not depose God from that supremacy over your affections which belongs to Him. There is no man living who realizes every species of wickedness in his conduct, or who enthrones every idol seducing him to wickedness in his heart. You may not serve many gods; but if you serve one god, and he be not the true God of heaven and of earth, to Him you are a rebel, and the full guilt of rebellion lies upon you. Many a generous-hearted youth would not make a sacrifice of integrity to the idol wealth; ay, but he may make an idol of pleasure. Many an elegant scholar would not debase himself by an act of intoxication; ay, but he may make an idol of fame. Many a lover of quietness would not envy the success of another's ambition; ay, but he may make an idol of ease. Each may think his own taste the most respectable, and give the preference to his own idol, but I come in upon them with a claim that sets aside all, and is paramount to all. I bring the demands of another Master to the door of every one of them. I tell them that it is quite in vain to be running each in complacency on his own way, and thinking that he is so much safer and so much better than his neighbours around him. It is precisely because it is his own way that he is wrong. It is a way to which he turns not by the authority of God, but by the desire of his own heart. It may be called a purer, or a more refined, or a more honourable way, but still, if God have no concern in it, what put him in that way but some affection of his own? and that affection being not towards God, is towards an idol. It is just because we have turned every man to his own way, that God looks upon us as wandering from Him, and that before He could recall us back again He had to clear the access between sinners and Himself, by laying upon Christ the iniquities of us all. Oh, no! my brethren, you may have several idols, and give up the service of one of them, but that is not enough; or you may leave one and take to another, but that will not do either. The God who made you and keeps you can put His hand upon every one of you, and say that you are mine, and whatever you do must be done by my will and to my service. I lay upon you the obligation of doing all things to Him, and ere you can be ready to fulfil this obligation, you must come out from all idols, and be separate from all.

And, again, what is that posture of the mind which is implied in its being separate from idols? It is by nature the subject of many desires, and there is surely no difficulty in conceiving what it is to follow out these desires. There is a bent of the mind which all of us have the familiar experience of, and it is every day exemplified by those thousands and thousands more who crowd the broad way which leadeth to destruction. It is a matter of constant observation how a desire springs in the heart; how, to obtain its accomplishment, a purpose is conceived; how, to execute the purpose, a deed is performed or a line of conduct is prosecuted; and how, throughout every step of this often-repeated process, God is not thought of, and His will is admitted to no share in the deliberations of the inner man, and to no influence upon the visible doings of the outer man. Such a man is wholly given over to the service of idols; he walketh after the counsel of his own heart and in the sight of his own eyes; he cares not for the bidding of God, and he seeks not to know what that bidding is; he just acts as if there were no God, or as if God had no will about any of his doings, or as if the expression of that will had never been revealed to him. Surely, it may well be said of such a man that he has broken loose from God; that he is astray and at a distance from Him; that he has fled from his lawful Master, and attached himself to the service of idols; and be it vanity or covetousness, or the love of pleasure, or ambition, or, if free from

the domineering violence of any one passion, which many an every-day character is, be it merely a calm general attachment to the creature and to the world; be it one, or several, or all of these which form the principles of his constitution—still they are only the different names of so many idols; and though the service of each of them imparts its own peculiar complexion to its own worshippers, they have all gone out of the way; there is none seeketh after God; they are idolaters, and have every one of them turned aside to idolatry.

Now let conscience waken within such a man. Let it put the authority of God before him as a rightful authority; let it tell him "It is not your desire, but the will of God that you should follow;" let it reveal to him the law, with all its high claims and all its unalterable sanctions; and conceive the effect of all this to be, that when the wonted desire springs up in his heart, and to which in time past he gave an unresisting obedience, there should now spring up along with it a something which keeps it in check, and which will not rest till it subordinates the desire to the requirement of God: here is a man separating from an idol—going over from the wrong to the right service, and, if you conceive that the new principle works upon him in all its universality, aims to subordinate not one desire of the heart, but all the desires of it; meets every wish and every affection with the question, But what is the will of God in this matter? urges him with the consideration that, whatever that will be, it ought to be followed; brings the impressive sense of duty and interest to bear upon every case on hand, and thus sets him to struggle it not merely with one idol, but with all idols: here is a man separating from them; here is a man working at the direction of the text, if he has not yet fulfilled it, of "be ye separate;" here is a man under the general conviction that his face has been hitherto turned the wrong way, and that now he must turn him to God; here is a man feeling that he ought to be, and conscious that such he has not hitherto been; here is a man looking towards God, and aspiring after the general object of being what God would have him to be; here is a man before the eye of whose mind there stands presented the will of God as opposed not to this one and to that other transgression, but as opposed to the whole array of his former desires, and pursuits, and affections; here is a man now actuated by a desire after the single, but most comprehensive object of conformity to this will; here is a man filled with a longing after the one service of God, and a clean and total separation from every other. Whether he has yet obtained that which he longs after, and how he is to accomplish the work of an entire separation, are other questions; but, at all events, here is a man in the incipient attitude of obedience to the direction of my text—an attitude into which he may put himself the moment that it is listened to and understood by him; and if he has not yet accomplished a separation from idols, he is at least in a state of honest readiness for doing all that may be right or necessary to accomplish it.

Now, my brethren, this is the very position I want to put you into. A man may refrain his hand from some evil performance, and not be in this posture; a man may refrain his tongue from some mischievous calumny, and not be in this posture; a man may refrain his feet from some gay and seductive company, and not be in this posture. The mere individual act of turning from these things may be performed by one who has not set himself to the one general act of turning unto God. Now we are repeatedly told in the Bible to make this turn, and there must be some deed of obedience by which it is performed. It is the very deed of obedience which I am now pressing upon you. It is not made up of many particular acts of obedience, but it is one act, which, if duly rendered, would carry every particular act of obedience along with it. No multiplication whatever of particular acts of obedience will make out the one general act of turning unto God. I, who want to live in the free indulgence of my appetites, may put myself under the regimen of a strict temperance, and not make it out; I, who want to make my own pleasure on the Sabbath day, may spend the whole of it in religious

observances, and not make it out; I, who want to catch at unfair advantages in business, may become most fearfully and most anxiously scrupulous, and not make it out. Oh, no! my brethren, turning unto God is not a matter eked out and completed by tacking one piece of obedience to another. It is one movement of the mind, which, if truly taken, subordinates the whole man, and separates him from all idols, and, putting him into the posture of a returning allegiance to God, makes him turn his back upon every one of them. You will not gain this posture by any number whatever of external and positive acts of obedience. It is an attitude of the mind; and it is not till the mind be addressed by the considerations fitted to influence it that it will be put into this attitude. It is not till conscience plies me with the rightful authority of God, and sets before me the enormity of being a rebel to Him, whose I am, and by whom it is that I have any place at all in the creation He has formed, and tells me of the worthlessness of idols, and pursues me with the voice of Turn from them unto God, and give to Him that allegiance which you have so long and so sinfully withheld from him—it is not till then that I am put into the commanding position of renouncing, in wish and in purpose, the creature for the Creator. A thousand acts of conformity to God's law will not set me on this position; but place me there, and you give me such an aspiring after an entire and unreserved obedience to the whole law as will carry in its train a thousand acts of conformity, and ten thousand more. I wait to know the will of God, and whatever be its requirements, I have the honest purpose of rendering obedience to each and to all of them. It is not by doing this one piece of work, or that other piece of work, or any given number of performances, that I am to make out the character or to earn the reward of God's servant, but, in the language of the psalmist, I say to Him even now, O God, I am thy servant. I give up every other master—put me to any piece of work Thou art pleased to assign me—to this extent do I profess, and to this extent it is my earnest wish that I should practise—lay all Thy commands upon me, and give me wisdom to understand and strength to perform them all.

But understand well, my brethren, that though there may be many acts of conformity to God's law which are of no account whatever, because not accompanied with a reigning principle of allegiance to God's authority, yet wherever this allegiance exists it will tell, and will tell immediately on the outward obedience. If I see that you are not framing your doings, I say most assuredly that allegiance to God is not formed, and is not forming, and has not even reached the infancy of its first moment in your hearts. Oh! there is much to be gathered from that complaint of the prophet, that they will not frame their doings to turn unto the Lord.* He had called upon them to turn and to turn, but when he saw that there was no change of doing among them, he felt that the work of turning was not even begun to. And there is just as much to be gathered from the text. It presses upon you the general habit, the changed attitude of the soul, in virtue of which it is separate from idols and turned to the true God; but at the same time that it presses this, and even before it presses the general habit upon you, it lays upon you a specific act; it bids you come out from among them; it does not wait for the slow formation of any unseen principle in the inner man, ere it urges you to a visible and external act of obedience on the outer man; it does not encourage any delay or any parrying in this matter. Oh! there is a wonderful freeness and energy in the practical addresses of the Bible! It does not leave you at a loss for want of knowing some clear, distinct, and palpable thing that you may turn your hand to. The idolater who was still lingering in a temple of heathenism, had he been met in person by the apostle, would have gotten from him an advice of far more comprehensive import than that he should not join in the pagan services of that day; he would have been told to separate himself from all idols for all the days of his life; but the mighty mind of the apostle, aiming

* Hosea v. 4.

at the accomplishment of so mighty a change in the heart and habits of an idolater, would still have found time and earnestness for laying upon him a specific act, and he would have laid the full stress of a practical importance on the one, individual, and immediate performance of leaving the temple in which he was now standing, and, without any squeamish, and slavish, and theorizing scrupulosity about the order of his directions, would he have said to him, in the words of the text, Go out from among them, and be ye separate.

Now, my brethren, I apply this to you and to your idols, and to the acts of sin which you perform in their service. I call upon you to be separated from them all; but I call upon you, also, to refrain from the very first act of sin that you may have opportunity of performing in the service of any one of them. Conceive it possible that this were the moment of such an act. I would not only tell you to separate yourself altogether from this kind of wickedness, but I would tell you to force yourself away, and that actually, from the particular act of wickedness you were now engaged in. Were I by the side of a young friend who was surrounded by dissipated companions, and in the full career of intoxication amongst them, I would tell him to separate himself from the idol of pleasure; but the office of his monitor would be woefully unfinished did I not whisper in his ear, and that with all the energy of alarm, that at this moment he should go out from among them. Were he the member of some unrighteous combination, a partner in some extended system of illicit merchandise, the companion of a brotherhood who practised their covenanted acts of dishonesty against the interests of the public, I would not let him off with an exhortation of such feeble generality as, Separate thyself from the idol of covetousness, but would press it upon him that without a moment's parrying or delay he should withdraw himself from that fellowship of iniquity, and go out from amongst them. Were he a worshipper at the shrine of fashion, and in that wretched competition of extravagance which has banished from society all the simplicity of kindness; were he to force out a splendour in the eye of his neighbour which pressed upon the means or the conveniences of his family, I would not stop short at telling him to separate himself from the idol of vanity, but I would urge him, in noble defiance to his former associates in expense, and to all their paltry insinuations, that at this moment he should bid adieu to their heartless parade, and come out from amongst them. I would not satisfy myself with the general direction; I would follow it up with the point of a specific requirement; I would bring it to the touchstone of an instantaneous act of obedience; I would not merely say, Be ye separate, but I would also say, Come out. An entire separation from all idols is the mighty object of a Christian's ambition; but it is an object to which he must move, and if I see no one act of breaking off from his idolatry, I have a right to say of him that he has not moved a single footstep in the way of obedience. One act of withdrawment may be performed by him who falls short of the habit of separation, but the habit of separation will never be reached by him who performs no act of withdrawment. Oh, no! my brethren; you may amuse yourselves all your days with the distant contemplation of the full stature and graceful accomplishments of the perfect man in Christ Jesus, but it is only by growing up unto Him that you will ever reach it; by moving from one degree of grace unto another; by an actual commencement of the course, and a steady perseverance in it. If I have not got you to cease from one act of homage to an idol, I have done nothing. If I have not prevailed upon you to resolve against the very next occasion of sin, I have given all my earnestness to the winds. If I have only wrought in you the conviction that it is your duty to separate from idols, but have not wrought in you the purpose to come out from among them, ay, and that immediately, I feel amongst you all the humiliation of a defeat—I am baffled in my attack upon the power of darkness within you. The lifting up of my voice has not awakened you from the deep spirit of slumber, nor has the word of exhortation which I have sounded in your ears been ac-

knowledged by that Spirit who can alone make the word effectual by giving it the energy of a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. I look around me, and see every symptom of attention engraven upon the countenance and expressed by the attitude of a listening people; but if all this is not accompanied by the purpose of abandoning the next act of homage you are tempted to render to an idol, under the imposing cover of all that stillness and seriousness which now sit so visibly among you, there is an enmity of heart arrayed against me in all the obstinacy of resistance; I have effected no lodgment in the inner man; and in my attempt to shake you out of the deceitfulness of sin, the enemy who reigns in and who occupies your bosoms has withstood, and he has overcome me.

In the great work of separating from an idol, and turning unto the Lord, there is an immediate movement that I would impress upon your footsteps. They must haste and make no delay to keep the commandments. It is right that the object of an entire renunciation should be fully in your eye, but this object will never be attained unless the work of renunciation is begun to, and I lay it upon you to begin it immediately. It is right for you to understand, that you do nothing to the purpose unless it be done in the spirit of a general desire to do everything unto the Lord; but what signifies the purity of the motive that you should wish to do everything, if in deed and in performance you have not done anything, and are not prepared to do the very next thing which time and opportunity bring round to you? In the act of turning to the Lord, you must frame your doings, and every moment of delay you incur in the doing of this one and that other prescribed thing, you are keeping separate from Him and clinging in service and in affection to one or more of your idols. I call upon you to break loose from every one of them; and if you do so, you will at this very instant emerge into the field of active obedience. You will go home, and put their services and their society away from you; you will forbear the wonted homage that you have been daily and hourly rendering them. If hitherto you have worshipped the idol of sensual pleasure, your very next feast will be a feast of temperance. If hitherto you have made an offering of truth to the idol of gain, your very next bargain will be a bargain of integrity. If hitherto you have made the offering of a sinful compliance to the idol of popularity among your profligate companions, your very next meeting with them will be signalized by an act of virtuous independence. I admit of no parrying in this matter. I will not be satisfied with the faint generality of a wish that you should be separate, but I insist on the wish being turned into business immediately, and evincing its strength and its reality by your coming out now from among them. I want to break up this dream of indolence; I want to blow in pieces every delusion which prolongs it. Whatever the employment of mind be which keeps you from embarking in the career of immediate exertion, I pronounce it to be wrong. Should it even be the hard knot of some doctrinal difficulty which shortens you and binds you up from putting forth an instant activity in this matter, I would cut it through, and tear it asunder as a spell of infatuation. Ah! my brethren, it is not enough that you be told how there must be an entire separation from idols ere you reach that place where nothing unclean and unholy ever enters. The hour of your departure from this world looks a distant futurity, and you put it far away from you; but I tell you that on this hour you must begin the work of separation; and knowing that delay is ruin, and how artful are the pleadings of the soul for a little more sleep and a little more slumber, I ply your consciences with the energy of an immediate call, and lift in your present hearing the solemn announcement that now, even now, you must come out from amongst them.

SERMON XIX.

*Sacramental Sermon.**

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 CORINTHIANS vi. 17, 18.

THE sinner who turns with his whole heart and whole soul to God comes to be separate from all idols. This is the object of his unceasing attempts and aspirations—this is the purpose by which he is actuated. The commencement of this purpose is marked by his coming from the service of idolatry, and at this time he comes out from among them. The continuance of this purpose is marked by his keeping from the service of the idolatry, and then it is that he refrains his hand from touching the unclean thing. He has come out from among them, and he will not go back again; and lest he should be allured, he refrains from the most distant approaches that may tempt his return. He will not even venture upon the borders of temptation—he will not even so much as touch the unclean thing. He dreads the power of seduction that lies even in the very outworks of idolatry, and he keeps studiously aloof from them. If temptation meet him, whether he will or not, he must grapple with it; but if he has a choice in the matter, he would rather fly from it. This is the safe and the scriptural way of managing every temptation—when it is in your power, keep without its reach. If your seducing companions have still a power of seduction over you, shun, if possible, their presence. If a luxurious entertainment has still a power of oversetting your purposes of control, save yourself by a timely withdrawment, or keep altogether away from it. If an alluring object present itself before you, turn away your eyes from viewing vanity. Your safety lies in caution. It will be long, and very long, my refraining friends, ere you should let down that vigilance which distrust and conscious weakness ought to inspire. You have come out from among the idolatries of your former days, have you?—well, you will find the work of keeping out from them a work of great watchfulness. You will need to have all your eyes about you, for you are surrounded with images of deceit which would light up your old affections, and bear you back again into the old service. Oh! it is wise to be suspicious of yourself and fearful of your own firmness. Go not wilfully to commit a vessel so frail to the rude shock of contending temptations, and keep your presence from the service of idolatry, and from all that would seduce you to the service.

But to touch not the unclean thing is not a mere act and exercise of the body—it is a precept that may be addressed to the mind, and to the management of its thoughts and affections. Remove your mind from the contact of every unlawful object that would steal upon its desires and tempt it to purposes of sin. Should an unhallowed thought offer to intrude itself, and kindle up any wayward affections, rebuke it from the inner chamber of the soul. Should the temptings of an unfair speculation kindle up any desires of covetousness, spurn it away from you. Should some gay and earthly vision of futurity offer to mislead your fancy, and bind it in captive attachment to the world you had abandoned, let the great and commanding realities of an eternal inheritance chase the hollow deceitfulness from your bosom. Keep your heart with all diligence. It is not safe to let it linger on the mountains of vanity. It is not right to commit it to the hazard which it is in your power to fly from, or wantonly expose it to the temp-

* Preached in the Tron Church at the first Sacrament dispensed by Dr. Chalmers in Glasgow, 5th November, 1815.

tations which you are commanded to pray against. Its tendencies are too much away from God, and too much directed to the creature, to be lightly tampered with; and it is only when you renounce the idolatries of the creature, and keep yourself separate from it, and harbour not the temptations which would draw you back to it, that God will receive you.

Before I proceed to the next clause, let me advert to one mischievous effect which the wordy and lengthened illustrations of a preacher may give rise to. He takes up one or two verses of the Bible, and he breaks them down into separate pieces, and he bestows his several paragraphs upon each of them, and he leads his hearers to look upon each as furnishing a distinct topic of remark and contemplation, when, in fact, the whole impression of the whole verse should be all in his mind together, and should give a force and a direction to every one of its clauses. As to the two verses which I have now submitted to you, by one breath of utterance I can pour the whole of it into the ear of a hearer—by one glance of the eye it can be all taken up into the mind of a reader —in a single moment its entire meaning may have taken possession of the heart, so that with the act of obedience to the first clause, "Come out from among them," there may exist at the same time an earnest desire after the fulfilment of the second clause, "Be ye separate," and a firm purpose of carrying the third clause into execution, "Touch not the unclean thing;" and the joyful encouragement which lies in the fourth clause, "I will receive you," giving movement to the very first steps of obedience, and cheering you through all its successive stages; and the blessed assurance of the last clause, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," telling upon you at the very outset of your new career, and beginning to obtain the earnest of its full and farther accomplishment with your very first attempts to seek God, if haply you might find Him —for He sees you afar off, even as the father saw his prodigal son, and He hears the very earliest of your cries after Him, and the prayer of "Turn me, and I shall be turned," lifted up from the very depths of enslavement, is not disregarded by Him; and it is strength from Him put into you that gives you the power of coming out from idols, and kept up in you that gives you power of maintaining a continual separation from idols, and dealt out to you in every hour of need and of temptation that gives you the power of resisting, and fleeing, and touching not what is unclean; and thus with the promises in your eye at the very outset, you have also at the very outset a beginning experience of their accomplishment, and God, receiving you into friendship, hands out to you larger and larger supplies of strength for progressive obedience, and holding Himself out as an offered Father—which He does at this moment to one and to all of you —He follows up your very first answer to His call, Come out from among them, with larger and larger supplies of the Spirit of adoption—you grow in the joyful confidence of being His sons and daughters as you grow in other things —the promise of being a Father to you tells upon your faith at the very first utterance of the exhortation; and as you come on in the exercise of filial obedience and filial affection, the alliance between you and God is begun with the very first act of turning to Him, and the very first expression you give of so turning by some act of obedience —as you persevere the alliance is cultivated and made closer—and thus it is that the fellowship between God and his strayed children is begun and carried forward in time, and will at length receive its blissful consummation in eternity.

Now, mark the effect which may sometimes arise from a separate dissertation being constructed on every separate clause and in the order of their following. There are successive portions of time taken up in the act of attending upon the tardiness of a human illustration, and we are apt to think that in the practice the several topics must be proceeded upon in the same order, and one of them must be mastered ere we try the obedience or take the comfort of the rest. We must first come out, and then keep out, and then refrain our hand from the most distant approaches of

temptation, and then, and not till then, God will receive us and be a Father to us. Now, my brethren, this is not the way of it. You read the whole of the text in a single instant, and in the very next your mind may be occupied with all its topics and set at work upon them all, and though the promises be the last in the enumeration, yet a faith in them may be the prime mover of the whole obedience which the text sets you to. At one and the same moment in which you come out from the riot of profligate companions there may be the steady purpose of never going back to them, and the vigilant determination to shun their most distant approaches—and the impelling cause of the whole may be consciousness within you that in so doing you are choosing a better part—that you are coming over to the service of a God who is willing even now to receive you into friendship, and to take upon Him your fatherly guidance and protection, and to feed you with spiritual nourishment, and to strengthen you for all the exercises of a spiritual obedience. Have you felt that I have set you to work your own way to God, and kept back from you the encouragement of the promise till you have done so? Then I have done wrong; and I now bring the full encouragement of the promise to bear upon you. Have any of you through the week been keeping at a distance from God, and trying by a hard struggle with the tyranny of idols to qualify yourselves for a nearer approach to Him? Then let the experience of your heartless and fatiguing and unfruitful exertions shut you up unto the faith. I call upon you at this moment to strike an act of reconciliation with a willing and a beseeching God, and at the very time that "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," are all in the mind, let the promise of affection to all who will, and of fatherly affection to all who will, be taken firm hold of by an act of steady and believing assurance.

The truth, therefore, that God is willing to receive you, I bring to bear upon the very first movements of your return from the service of idols to His service. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance. A sense of that goodness brought home to the heart by the faith of the gospel, mingles a constraining influence with the purposes of a mind deliberating upon the repentance of the gospel. Oh, no! my brethren, I will not therefore keep back the view of a willing and an inviting God till you have described some period of terror, and walked without Him in the cheerless round of some previous reformation. I want to possess your heart even now with the assurance of a God bending in compassion over you, and saying to one and to all—"Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" Charged as I am with this message of tenderness to the whole human race, I would not refuse to meet the most profligate among you in the full onset of his wilful and determined career, and lay it across his path. I am not at liberty to keep it back from the most worthless and abandoned of the species. The necessity is laid upon me, and woe is me if I preach not this gospel to sinners of all degrees, to rebels of all denominations. You could not, my brethren, you could not carry me to any one haunt of wickedness so deeply sunk in the lowest and the loathsomest of sin's abominations, where I would not forget my office as the messenger of a beseeching God, did I not lift my testimony to His willingness to receive all and to forgive all. You could not point my eye to a single wanderer so far gone from the path of obedience that the widely-sounding call of reconciliation cannot reach him. You could not tell me of a heart so hard and so impenitent that I must not try to soften it by the moving argument of a God waiting to be gracious. Ay, it may have made many a stout resistance to other arguments—it may have defied every warning, and sheathed itself in impenetrable obstinacy against every threatening, and smothered every conviction by plunging the whole man into a deeper and more desperate rebellion; and when all the terrors of the Lord were brought in mustering array against it, it may have gathered itself up into a sterner attitude of defiance, and put on a darker scowl of alienation—Oh, can nothing now be done to storm the citadel that has all along held out so impregnably? Has the ambassador of God exhausted his

quiver of all its arguments? and must the poor child of infatuation be left without an effort more to rescue him from the perdition he so determinedly clings to?

The text supplies me with one other argument. It puts into my mouth the very substance of that gospel which has so often proved itself the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. It unrobes God of all unrelenting severity, and directs my eye to the Monarch of the Universe seated on a throne of mercy, and pleading for the return of His strayed creatures with every accent of tenderness. He speaks to them with the longings of a father bereaved of his children—He descends to the language of entreaty—the great God of heaven and of earth knocks at the door of every rebellious heart, and begs admittance. That heart which all the terrors of God could not force to repentance, He now plies with the goodness of God that He may lead it to repentance. I will receive you—I have no pleasure in your death—I wish you all, and would welcome you all, back again—I want you to be my sons and my daughters, and I will be a Father to you. Oh! my brethren, if after the wrath and the justice of God have failed to move your hearts out of the inflexibility which belongs to them, He shall again ply you with His invitations, and your bosoms shall remain in shut and sullen resistance to the tenderness of His touching voice—then to the disobedience of His law you have added the neglect of His salvation; and surely it may be said of those who have not only resisted His authority, but have despised the riches of His forbearance and His long-suffering, that the last arrow has been shot at them, and it has proved ineffectual—and that gospel which, had they received it, would have been to their soul the savour of life unto life, has turned out the savour of death unto death.

Mark then, my brethren, how the faith of the gospel and the repentance of the gospel are linked together, and how the one furnishes the other with its most moving and effectual argument. It is true, I add to my guilt by persevering in my disobedience; but without faith I feel all the helplessness of despair under the burden of a guilt that is already upon me. It is true that every one sin heightens the displeasure of an offended God; but I am even now the object of displeasure which, if wreaked upon me in all the severity of justice, would sink me into a suffering more deep and painful than I can stretch my conceptions to. It is true that every act of rebellion committed by my heart swells the heavy account that is betwixt me and God; but the account is already against me to my entire and everlasting destruction—and where, in all the wide compass and variety of human thought, shall we find a note that can stir up to exertion the man who knows that he is undone? How, in the name of wonder, can that man be prevailed upon to help himself who knows that upon the very attempt there lies the burden of an impossibility? How shall a man be excited to seek God if he knows that there is an insurmountable barrier between them? How shall He enter upon the task of propitiating His mercy, if he knows that the immutability of His truth lies in the way of it? and that He of whom it is said, that He hath spoken and will He not perform—hath pronounced a curse upon all the children of iniquity? Ah! my brethren, had He not stepped forward Himself, and said, in the language of my text, that I will receive you, we would have lived without hope, and in so doing we would have lived without God in the world. Had these tidings of the gospel not reached us, we should have been kept down to our old habits and our old ways by the inactivity of despair; and it is not till the hope of making good our return dawns upon us, and the glad prospect of acceptance is laid before us to lure our footsteps from that path of disobedience in which we had wandered, that we shall move a single inch to the call of—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing;" and though "I will receive you" be the last in the order of the enumeration put down in the Bible, it is among the first in the order of influence upon the believer's mind; nor should he have bestirred himself in the great work of seeking after God had not the inviting

voice of God Himself waved him forward and drawn him to the enterprise.

But God has done something more than proclaim an open way of return to the sinners who stand afar off. He hath told us how that way is opened. He hath explained to us the mystery of sinners being brought near, and being taken into acceptance. He has not left us to guess, and to wonder, and to suspect the purity of His justice and the inflexibility of His truth, and to look upon sin as a trifle that may be easily fallen into by the creature, and as easily connived at by the Creator. He hath made known His mercy, but not till He got that mercy to meet and be in harmony with His truth. He hath published peace, but not till He established a firm alliance between peace and righteousness. Along with the revelation of His mercy He hath made an awful vindication of the majesty of His high attributes. It is true He condescended to put Himself into the attitude of a petitioner, and implore the return of sinners, and ply them with the assurances of His willingness to welcome them back again. Wonderful attitude, indeed, for the God whose law had been trampled upon, and who throughout this province of His mighty creation had a whole world turned in one wild outcry of rebellion against Him; but oh! my brethren, we mistake it, if we think that the attitude, wonderful as it is, was the attitude of fallen majesty, or of a God whose throne had been dismantled of all the securities which upheld it. Oh, no, my brethren; in this mighty triumph of mercy there was the triumph of His every other attribute; and while the messengers of God have a full warrant to pour into the sinner's ear the plaintive tenderness of a father in quest of his children who had wandered like sheep among the mountains away from him—the warrant is put into their hands by Him, who having magnified the law and made it honourable, has caused the truth and the righteousness of God to burst forth in brighter manifestation than ever upon the eyes of a guilty and humbled world.

This resolves the whole mystery. Sinners who stand afar off are brought near to God through Him that died the just for the unjust. He bare our sins on His body upon the tree, and His blood cleanseth from all sin. This is the sure way of access. This is the well-ordered covenant. It is because the mighty obstruction is removed by Him who travailed in the greatness of His strength, that God says, without the drawback of a single impediment, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." It is the assurance of being received—it is the confidence that every bar which lay on the road of access has been cleared away—it is a faith in the sufficiency of what the great Mediator has done for us, that gives the returning sinner all his encouragement to begin the work of repentance. It is this belief in the Son of God which gives a security to the very first acts of repentance, which carries him forward through all the successive steps of that process by which he recovers the lost image of Him who created him, which upholds him through all the varied scenes, and dangers, and enterprises of the Christian warfare, and at length, by the continued supplies of that grace which is so richly provided for all who ask it, makes him stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God. It is Christ who hath done all this. It is He, the memorials of whose atonement are placed before your eyes, that hath made this plain way for the feet of every returning penitent. It is through Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before you, that you draw near to God in all those exercises of hope and dependence and new obedience, that are prescribed by Him, and are alone acceptable through Him. It is He, the symbols of whose death we are this day employed in contemplating, who hath opened through the veil of His flesh a new and a living way of access to God. Out of that way there is no hope, and where there is no hope there is no steady nor acceptable godliness. I could not move towards a being who scowled severity upon me. I could not attempt to soften the God who stood before mine eyes shielded in all the inflexibility of unappeased justice. I am kept down by all the oppressive languor of helplessness and despair from offering obedience

to Him of whom it is said that He cannot be mocked, and whose truth and purity demand that He should spurn my wretched attempts in abhorrence away from Him. But in Christ every bond is loosed, and every difficulty is done away—and the soft whisper of that pardon which He has purchased, and of that mercy, the gates of which He has unlocked and let down in plenteous redemption upon a despairing world, sends the right and the effectual influence into a sinner's heart; and it is my prayer that by this great and solemn act of remembrance you may get such a new and affecting view of the way of repentance which lies so clear and so open before you, that from this time forward you may cease from your idols, and come out from among them, and every day of your lives may be enabled to accomplish a wider and a more determined separation, and to touch not any unclean thing which God hateth—that thus, while God, out of Christ, looking upon you as He did upon the Egyptians out of a cloud, and troubling your souls with the terrific aspect of a consuming fire, would never have moved your approaches towards Him, may you now be prevailed upon to turn from all sin by the delightful assurance that God is willing to receive you; and may you be cheered in your every attempt and your every performance by the winning countenance of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses.

ADDRESS.

The great and specifical end of that affecting solemnity we are now engaged in, is to show forth the death of Christ. This is our infirmity, my brethren, that we are so much the creatures of what is present, and of what is sensible. A thing seen makes a distinct and a powerful impression upon us. A thing that is spiritual, and therefore cannot be seen, is conceived but faintly. There is a natural darkness about us through which the realities of the spiritual world look dim and distant, and leave a very languid impression either on the feelings of the heart or on the purposes of our willing and acting and resolving nature. And this holds true not merely of wha is spiritual, but of what is sensible also if that which is sensible be not present—if removed from us by the length of many ages, it can only be brought home by an act of remembrance, or rather by a narrative of history—if the mind must put itself on a stretch of conception in order to lay hold of it, and to be impressed by it, and to be awakened to that train of sentiment it is fitted to inspire. Now, my brethren, the death of Christ is an event which comes under the latter description. In contemplating that death, the mind is not employed on a spiritual object. That event did not take place beyond the confines of this tangible and material world. It was seen by the eye of man; and had we been present at the Crucifixion, that which we are now employed in remembering would have come home with all the force and all the vivacity of an actual representation upon our senses. But we are now placed at the distance of many hundred years from the era of that great decease which was accomplished at Jerusalem, and we must stir ourselves up to lay hold of it by an act of apprehension, and we must summon all our powers of remembrance and of conception to the exercise; and such is the sluggishness of our mental faculties, that—do our uttermost—we often cannot succeed in realizing anything beyond a very dull and spiritless imagination of the Saviour's death; and to accommodate to this infirmity did our Saviour before He left the world, kindly bequeath and recommend to us the use of an expedient by which the aid of sense is as it were called in to brighten that impression which might otherwise have been so dark and ineffectual. He has instituted a lively and a touching memorial of the whole transaction. He has consecrated to the remembrance of His death the visible symbols of bread and of wine. He has so decreed it, that through the inlet of the senses His death may still be shown forth, and He Himself be evidently set forth crucified before us. And what I call on you, my brethren, practically to observe at present, is to make the appointed use of these material elements—through the

medium of the bread you eat, to think of the Saviour's broken body—through the medium of the wine you drink, to think of the Saviour's shed blood—to contemplate by the eye of faith the real, the substantial, the power-working significancy of this body and blood—how by the one the whole burden of your iniquities is borne—how by the other you are cleansed from all sin—how by both you are reconciled to the great Lawgiver—how through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh you may enter with boldness the presence of the Eternal—and how, if your mind be doing with the cross of the Saviour what your body is now doing with the memorials of the Cross, you are standing on that very way of access in which God will rejoice to meet you, and speak quietly to you, and make no more mention of the sins whereby you have sinned against Him, and rejoice over you to do all manner of good, and crown you with His loving-kindness and tender mercy, and give you peace of conscience here and a growing meetness for a crown of glory hereafter.

The great event which we commemorate by the keeping of this sacrament is the death of the Saviour. The great event which we commemorate by the keeping of the Sabbath is the resurrection of the Saviour. It is worthy of remark, that the first disciples did not take the week-day of His death to celebrate that institution which our Saviour appointed as the memorial of it—neither did they take the week-day of that first sacrament at which our Saviour Himself presided, and where He ate the passover with his sorrowing disciples. They remembered His death on the week-day of His resurrection. They assembled to break bread on the first day of the week. They fixed on the great day of Christian triumph as the occasion on which they chose to commemorate an event which was clothed at the time in every character of sadness—which burst upon the despairing apostles as the death-blow of all their hopes—and forced them to give up all their fond and splendid anticipations of Him of whom they thought that verily it was He should have redeemed Israel. Christ arose from the grave and restored to them all their triumphant thoughts of the Master they had chosen — and they fixed on the first day of the week for the sacrament of the Supper, that when its touching symbols reminded them how Christ had died, the day on which they made use of those symbols should put the comfortable suggestion into their hearts, that rather He is risen again. I, in the same manner, call on you, my brethren, to mingle the Sabbatical with the sacramental remembrance; and while you weep over the afflicting memorials of that death by which the whole burden of a world's atonement was borne by Him who in that hour put forth all His strength and travailed in the greatness of it, sorrow not even as others who have no hope; but think, oh think, of that right hand of God where He now liveth, and that place of glory which He now occupies.

But indeed the words of the institution provide for this very remembrance. We are called on not merely to show forth the Lord's death, but to show it forth till He come again. Now, from what quarter are we to look for Him? Not from the prison-house of the grave, for the barrier of this confinement He has already broken; not from the toils of His contest with the principalities of sin and of death, for this contest is now over, and He has already ascended up on high, laden with the spoils and crowned with the triumphs of victory—not from the dark abodes of corruption, for He has already cleared his unfettered way from the whole of this bondage, and the men of Galilee beheld Him as He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and a voice was heard by them, asking—Why stand ye gazing up into heaven, for this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven? I should like you, my brethren, to exercise your faith on this solemn and affecting reality—I should like you to enter from this moment into a firmer, and a faithfuller, and a more closely felt alliance with that living intercessor who is now looking over you—who sees your every heart—who takes a note of all its movements

and all its purposes—who hands up your most secret aspirations to the Father who sitteth on the throne, and is ever ready to plead the merit of His all-perfect obedience on behalf of all who believe in Him. Let the spirit of this hallowed place accompany you into the world. When you go down from the mount of communion, may its faith, and its peace, and its purposed holiness go along with you. Walk through life as the followers of Him of whom you have now witnessed a good confession in the eyes of men; and with hearts refreshed by this act of fellowship with the Father, go back to your business and your homes more strengthened than ever for all duty, more devoted than ever to all the pursuits and to all the performances of holiness.

SERMON XX.

*The Temptation.**

'And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."—LUKE iv. 1—13.

VERSE 1.—"And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." It is worthy of remark that as Jesus in His human nature was tempted in all points like as we are, so He overcame that temptation by the very same power which is in a measure bestowed upon us for combating with temptation. He overcame Himself, and it is out of His fulness that we receive that which enables us to overcome also. He was full of the Holy Ghost in His combat with the great adversary. It was a contest between the power of God's Spirit and of the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience. The parties in the contest, when Christ our head was engaged, were the very same with the parties in the contest when we His members are engaged.

Verse 2.—"Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered." There is no doubt that the appellation of "devil" here is restricted to one particular being; and with us it has all the limited signification of a proper name. But the term in the original is descriptive of character—given originally to the prince of the apostate angels, because it characterized him, but also occasionally used in the Bible in its general signification. Thus, if taken in its original meaning, it may be, and actually is in some parts of the Bible, applied to human beings. In its primitive sense, it signifies a false accuser, or a slanderer, or a traducer. (1 Tim. iii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 3; Tit. ii. 3; John vi. 70.) Satan is another name applied to the prince of the apostate angels. It is also significant of character or state, and means an adversary.

Verse 3.—"And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

* Preached at Glasgow, 26th November, 1815.

We have, in all probability, very far from a full record of all the wiles and suggestions of the tempter. Christ was tempted forty days—it is thought by the mere instigations which the devil put into His heart; but that he afterwards, at the end of this time, appeared to Him in a visible form, when He was ahungered with long abstinence, and then plied Him with three great and last attempts to seduce Him from His post of entire trust and entire obedience to God.

Verse 4.—"And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." When Jesus took upon Him human nature, He did so for the express purpose that He should suffer and that He should do as a brother of the species. It is the perfection of His human obedience which renders His example applicable to us; and it is this which qualified Him for being a High Priest for others. He had no sins of His own to atone for. He knew no sin, yet became a sin-offering for us; and it is the purity of His obedience as a man which is imputed for righteousness to them who believe on Him. Now, had He made use of His miraculous power for the purpose of exempting Himself from those sufferings which were laid upon Him by His Father, this would not only have impaired the perfection of His suffering obedience, but would have made it quite useless to us as an example—for we have not the miraculous power that He had ever in readiness to be exerted in the hour of calamity. It would have been a positive non-compliance with the appointment of His Father; for you will observe that His situation in the remote wilderness, and the consequent hunger which His distance from the supplies of food brought upon Him, was not a thing of His own doing. He was led by the Spirit into His present situation—there He was by the will of God. It was not for Him to do anything, but to wait the issue of God's counsel concerning Him. To work a miracle in order to repair the necessary evil of the situation into which God had brought Him, were to distrust God. The language for Him was, My Father brought me here, and He will carry me in safety out again. The pain He felt from hunger was of God's laying on; and should He endeavour to assuage it by a miracle, this were an advantage to Himself, but no advantage in the way of example, no advantage to the individuals of that species whose form He put on, and whose infirmities He bore, and whose sufferings He underwent—that He might set Himself before them an example that they should walk in His steps. It would have frustrated this purpose entirely, besides being a positive act of dissent from the will of God which brought Him to His present situation, and which laid upon Him all his sufferings. The gift of working miracles belonged to Him as a talent for the use of others, and not as a privilege for the ease or gratification of Himself. There is another remarkable example of His abstaining from the exercise of miraculous power, when it could have served the purpose of delivering Him from His enemies. He could have obtained the assistance of twelve legions to deliver Him from the hands of His murderers; but He forbore—for had He done so, it would have frustrated the purposes of His mission. That example reflects an explanation on the present one. The sentiment with which He repelled the instigation of the tempter was a sentiment of trust in God. God brought me here, and He can provide for me here. I am not to step out of my way to save myself from the painfulness of a situation of God's putting me into. I am not to do what is undutiful or untrustful to recover the mischiefs of a state which was brought on by Him, and not by any independent movement of my own human will at all. Here I am by His will; and my confidence is in His wisdom, and in the power of His word, which is able, if He so choose, to keep me alive in the absence of all ordinary means.

There is one remarkable peculiarity worthy of all observation in this verse, Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It was in the fulness of the Spirit that He entered into the contest with the great adversary of men. It was by the armour of the Spirit's sug-

gestion that He was enabled to overcome all the artfulness and all the allurement of the suggestions of the tempter. But still the suggestion with which He combated and overcame, though given Him by the Spirit, was neither more nor less than a quotation from the Bible. This is a fine illustration of the passage where the word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It may practically be of great use to all of you. Take every practicable and ordinary means for making yourselves acquainted with your Bibles. Store your minds with its sayings and its passages, for they constitute—if I may be allowed the expression—the material armour by which you wrestle with the enemies of your salvation. When tempted, for example, to evil company, it is no doubt the Spirit that will enable you to turn aside from this temptation; but it is not by any visitation of extraordinary light upon the subject of this danger. He may do no more than exercise His office of bringing all things to remembrance, by bringing the single text—'Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners," to bear with powerful efficacy upon your understandings and your fears. This is the general way in which He acts. We have no reason to expect that in any given case He will ever act otherwise. It is presumption to trust in any other kind of illumination than by the words of Scripture being made luminous and impressive to you; or in any other kind of defence than by the moral influence of the lessons of Scripture upon the choice and conduct of the believer. There is something highly interesting in this introduction of the Bible as the weapon made use of by the Son of God, to carry Him through the contest with the prince and the leader of that mighty rebellion, which seems to have spread so extensively over some higher fields of creation. Let it rebuke our irreverence for the sacred volume—let it chase away the fanaticism of all unscriptural visions and unscriptural inspirations from the religion which we profess, and to which we do injustice if we strip it of the dignity of reason, or graft upon it the weaknesses of a superstitious fancy. Let it teach us, on the one hand, that we do wrong by resting a security on the naked promise of the Spirit to guide and to enlighten us—for the Spirit does so, not against and not without, but with the use of the Bible; and we have no right whatever to expect that He will make use of this instrument in our behalf, if we do not take the prescribed way of using it in our own behalf. Let us be diligent in the exercise of all ordinary means for growing in the knowledge and in the remembrance of it—let it be our daily perusal; and let us never think that we shall be able to overcome temptation with our minds away from the Bible—but that it is when the lessons of the Bible are present to our minds, when we have laid up the word of God in our heart, that we do not offend Him.

But, on the other hand, let us not forget, that though it was by a quotation from the Bible that our great Patron repelled the instigation of our great adversary, He was all the while under the guidance of the Spirit. It was in the fulness of the Holy Ghost that He grappled with the mighty enemy of human salvation. While we read, then, let us feel at the same time our dependence on Him who alone can make us understand what we read with a saving and a spiritual discernment; and while we exercise our memory upon what we read, let us feel our dependence at the same time on Him who alone can bring things to our remembrance so as to suit our occasions, and who can give us grace to help us in the time of need by bringing into our mind that verse, or that passage, or that scriptural sentiment, which will serve as the appropriate suggestion for repelling the temptation on hand. Now, this is the right and compound attitude of those who busy themselves in either learning the way of salvation, or walking in that way. It is only with the ordinary use of the Bible, on the one hand, and the dependence of faith on the pure and life-giving Spirit, on the other, that we complete the preparation for fighting with all the enemies of our souls, and may be said to have taken to ourselves the whole armour of God.

In the order of the narrative by

Matthew, what is recorded by Luke as the last and concluding attempt of the devil, is brought in as immediately succeeding the one that I have now so largely insisted on. I shall therefore at present pass over the intermediate verses and go on to the ninth verse. The last sentiment which our Saviour expressed was a sentiment of reliance upon God. God hath brought me into a way of His own choosing; and I will submit to all the sufferings of that way, and will rather trust to some miraculous exercise of power in my favour, than by an act of distrust and an act of undutifulness, make any attempt to escape these sufferings myself. The present temptation is most artfully accommodated to this state of mind. Let me now try the extent of your trust in the power of God; throw yourself from this pinnacle of the temple, and see what God's power can accomplish for you. You have brought one verse from the Bible to repel my last suggestion, I will bring another to enforce my present one. And thus, with a besetting plausibility of argument and address, does this Satan ask it of our Saviour to cast Himself down from hence, "For it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The answer to this proposal is given in verse 12—"It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To tempt signifies to try. The effect of a trial is often a discovery of the sinfulness and deceitfulness of him who is the subject of it; and hence, to tempt has got another signification distinct from the original one—to allure, to seduce. But here you must take it according to its original meaning—thou shalt not put God to the proof—thou shalt not make an experiment of God. But it is said here, "The Lord thy God." Now the God whom you have embraced as a reconciled Father may be called thy God. Jesus could well appropriate God in this manner; and you may understand wherein the sinfulness of tempting God consists, by figuring to yourself the case of a friend whom you had every reason to trust, but whom in point of fact you were not perfectly sure of, and upon whom you made an experiment with the view of ascertaining his fidelity and the extent of his regard for you. For this purpose you might create a case, or you might feign a necessity, with the view of ascertaining what the conduct of your doubtful friend would be. Now does not this imply an ungenerous suspicion of him? Is there not a want of trust in the very attempt to make yourself surer of him than you feel yourself to be at this moment? And if you have every reason to repose in the faithfulness and in the constancy of his affection, were it not a more generous confidence on your part to carry about with you the general assurance—"If I get involved in necessities I am sure he will step forward to get me out of them," than for you to step out of your way, and either create or feign a necessity for the purpose of trying him? And so of God, my brethren, in the present case, in reference to Christ. He had already given proof of the confidence He rested on the support of His Father and of His Friend by the way in which He resisted the first instigation of the great adversary. I will not step out of the way in order to deliver myself from the evils of a situation into which God hath himself led me—I will not break a duty to do so. I will not put my power of working miracles to a different use from that for which it was conferred upon me. This power was not conferred for the purpose of helping myself out of the trials which God is pleased to lay on me, and to make this use of it would be an act of distrust and an act of rebellion. Oh, no! here I am by His will, and I leave myself with unbounded confidence to His wisdom. Now observe the address and the promptitude with which His able and intelligent adversary avails himself of this state of sentiment in the mind of Jesus. Give us a proof of this confidence—cast yourself down from the pinnacle of this temple—let not your distrust in God arrest you or make you hesitate about doing this, for He will bear you up; and out of those very Scriptures from which you have gotten your argument against my first instigation, do I bring an argument in behalf of my second instigation, for it is written, how He has

given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and how in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Now mark the still superior intelligence and address with which our Saviour extricated Himself from this wile of the adversary. He perceived where the art lay, and He saw through the covering of plausibility which he who had the power of transforming himself into an angel of light spread over it; and by the answer, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, He most entirely vindicated the consistency of his own sentiments, and most triumphantly repelled this renewed attack of the tempter. I would not go out of my way to distrust God's faithfulness; but neither will I go out of the way to put his faithfulness to the trial. If God put me into a given situation, I am sure that out of all its evils and all its difficulties He will extricate me; but I will not put myself, by any wanton, or arbitrary, or undutiful act of mine, into any given situation with the view of an experimenting on the kindness and the fidelity of God. Of that kindness and that fidelity I entertain the most unshaken assurance. Sustained by this principle I will endure all the agonies of hunger, till the same Spirit who led me into this wilderness leads me out of it. I am here by His will; nor will I take one unwarrantable step to alleviate the burden of these trials which He is pleased to lay upon me; but it is the very strength of this confidence upon which Satan is persuading me to put my Friend and my Father to the trial that makes me resist such an experiment, and repel the artful suggestion which would lead me to it. I will not betray a distrust in God by going out of the way to provide myself with bread; neither will I betray a distrust in God by going out of my way to ascertain a point which I am already sure of. Oh! it was a deep and artful policy which lay at the bottom of this second instigation; but does not this just heighten your esteem for the discernment of that superior wisdom which overmatched and overruled it? and in the pure and delicate and correct line of conduct which was followed by our Saviour, do you not perceive both the reach of a commanding sagacity, and the harmonious workings of one noble, consistent, and well-sustained principle?

This passage of our Saviour's history admits, I think, of many interesting applications. But at present I shall conclude with one remark which, if kept in mind, might prepare you for the various lessons wherewith the narrative of our Saviour's temptation is charged. I beg that you will make a distinct exercise of attempting to get the better of those ludicrous and degrading associations which the very name and conception of the devil do in fact bring into the mind. It is most unfortunate when any one item in the list of revealed truths is contemplated in such a light as to have anything of the mean or the familiar, and far more, of the light and jocular, annexed to it. I have no doubt that the general levity of sentiment which obtains even among professing Christians upon this subject is the work of one of his own artifices. Its undoubted effect is to disguise from the eye of your own minds the power and the seriousness of your own enemies—to lull you into a security where no security should be felt—to make you laugh when you ought to be alarmed—to seduce you from the post of vigilance you are everywhere called upon to maintain—and to fill you with giddiness upon a subject on which you ought to feel all the solemnity of a Bible doctrine, and all the seriousness of a danger that, if not guarded against, may beset you to your final and everlasting destruction. Is there anything in the passage now submitted to you, that throws the slightest air of wantonness over this department in the field of revelation? Do you not see in it all the talent and skill of an archangel, guided no doubt by the malignity of his fallen nature, but bringing all the resources of a most consummate art into this one battle with the Captain of our salvation—and overborne only by that superior reach of discernment, and that superior force of principle, which belonged to Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Point me a single other passage of the Bible that can at all justify the

senseless levities which are indulged upon this topic. It is in that high and prophetic vision of the Son of God, when He said, I beheld Satan fall like lightning from heaven—or in that verse where he is called the god of this world—or in that where the mighty work of the Saviour is stated to consist in the destroying of his works—or in the anxious and repeated warnings by which the disciples are everywhere plied, that they may resist him, that they may guard against him, that they may not keep themselves ignorant of his devices, that they may not be taken captives by him at his pleasure, that they may not be blinded by him lest the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon them? Ah! my brethren, we see not the matter aright, if we see not the most sublime and eventful contest going on among the upper orders of creation, and that the sovereignty over men is the grand object of the contest. In the passage before us, you see Satan in visible alarm for the security of his usurped dominions; and you see him foiled in his first attempt on the great Prince and Deliverer of mankind, who, in the mighty travail of His soul, put forth all the greatness of His strength, and spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. This is the actual situation of the world—a mighty stage of conflict and ambition to higher beings, who are aspiring after the mastery over it. We are the subjects of this great and mighty contention; and is it, I would ask, is it a right exercise for us to lift the idiot laugh, and scatter our ridiculous allusions around a matter of which the Bible has attested the solemn and impressive reality, and in which the fate of our eternity is so deeply involved? Ah? my brethren, you are not rightly prepared for the contest, if you remain thus wilfully and wantonly ignorant of the enemies that beset you—you have not yet put on the whole armour of God, if the habitual attitude of resistance to the great adversary be not diligently maintained by you—you have not done all to stand, if you exercise not that faith in Christ by which alone you are enabled to withstand him whose works Christ came to destroy—you do not see the matter aright, if in every temptation which crosses your path, and in every evil thought which would lead you from the belief or the love or the practice of the gospel, you do not recognize another and another attempt of him who is incessantly warring against the soul: And happy shall I be, my brethren, should these hints give such a direction to the desire and the doings of any one of you, as may help you forward in that great business of sanctification, by which the influence of the Evil One over your alienated hearts is completely done away, and you are rendered altogether meet for the company of Him in heaven—whose grace dealt out to you on earth enables you to resist the devil, and purifies you from all spot and wrinkling, and restores to you the lost image of your Creator, and prepares you for the fellowship of Him and of the unfallen angels who surrounds His throne.

SERMON XXI.

*The Temptation.**

"And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."—LUKE iv. 1—13.

JESUS was set before us as an example that we should follow His steps; and if we do not fasten an attentive eye upon all that He did in this lower world, we do not fulfil the duty which lies upon us of looking unto Jesus. In conformity to the undoubted truth of this assertion, that all Scripture is profitable, there is no part of our Saviour's revealed history which may not be turned to some profitable account; and it is from the want of attention, from the listless and superficial style of our reading the Bible, and running over the task of its successive chapters, that so many of its passages are just of as little significancy, and exert as small an influence over us, as if they were veiled from our eye by some material covering, or occurred at intervals as so many chasms of blank paper. Many of us, perhaps, may never have adverted to the practical lessons that may be gathered from the history of the remarkable encounter that took place between the Captain of our salvation, armed as He was with the fulness of the Spirit of God, and that great adversary who, whatever our dark and degraded conceptions of him, is at the head of a mighty rebellion on the wide theatre of God's administration, and, with the exception of a very little flock, wields an entire ascendency over the face of this world which lieth in wickedness, and claims so thorough and so firm a footing in this province of the universe, that he is called in the Bible the god of this world; and who, when he made his attack upon the Saviour, armed with the Spirit of God, entered into the combat with Him by the opposing armour of that spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience; and the result of the contest, wherein the great Head of the Church was engaged, was just the same with what the result will be of that actual contest which he carries on with the members of the Church; even those who hold Christ the Head, and who, receiving out of His fulness the same Spirit of God, will be enabled to overcome on this principle, that greater is He who is in them than he who is in the world.

But we have not gathered all the information that is to be gotten out of the passage before us, until we have ascertained what the precise moral lessons are which the conduct of Christ, under the particular temptations by which He was assailed, is fitted to impress. Do any cases occur in the whole history of man, bearing such a resemblance to the cases of the text that we may obtain out of them a pointed and particular instruction of Go, and do likewise? Tell me a single case, for example, that can make out anything like a parallel between the situation of

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a human being and the situation of Jesus Christ, when He was tempted by the instigation of commanding this stone that it be made bread. Why, my brethren, I believe that out of this passage a principle may be gathered applicable to a thousand diversities in the history of human affairs; but instead of announcing a general principle, and then applying it to cases, I have often thought it a more effectual way to begin with stating an impressive case, and out of that evolving a clear and commanding principle. I direct your attention, then, all at once to the very frequent and familiar case of a man on the eve of bankruptcy, when he is agitated by all the forebodings of controversy, when futurity lowers upon him, and his heart bleeds within him at the approaching descent which his family must soon make before the eye of the public. I do not say that the resemblance between him and his great pattern lies in his having to sustain the buffeting of a personal encounter with the adversary of his soul; but think not, my brethren, think not that the vigilant eye of this prince of darkness is not upon him—that he is not making every use of his opportunity to secure a subject to his dominions; and, though he does not whisper the temptation into his ear, think not that he is not plying his heart with an allurement which many, I fear, in the unhappy circumstances I am now conceiving, have found to be irresistible. He does not just say, Command this stone that it be made bread; but does he not come round the despairing man with his busy suggestions, and make every trial to shake him out of his integrity, and fill his agitated bosom with the painful image of a beggared family, even as the bosom of the Saviour was filled with the agonies of hunger? And do you not think that he has some hand in the affair when the deluded man is meditating on unfair and dishonourable expedients for securing some fragment to himself out of the wreck of his ruined speculation?

Ah! my brethren, it is he who, in effect, has commanded that such goods as can be easily conveyed from the notice of creditors shall be turned into bread. It is he who sets you on some plan of secresy for turning all you can lay your hand on into a provision for yourself and for your children. It is he who glosses over the dishonesty of the proceeding, and lulls the conscience into quietness, by mingling with the temptation the kind, and amiable, and natural impulse of a parent's affection and a parent's anxiety. It is he, my brethren, who pursues this artful game, and finds his abundant harvest of ruined principle and integrity in that sweeping tide of fluctuation, which sets in at intervals with such a devouring energy, as not only to overwhelm the rash adventurer, but to tear up by the sinews the firmest and oldest establishments. Ah! my brethren, it is in a season so critical as this that the principle of a Christian is brought to its severest trial, and that the wily tempter plies him with the suggestion to take hold of what is not his own, and on what he has no right to put his finger, that he might turn it into bread.

Now, mark the sentiment wherewith a real and an altogether Christian will meet the deceitfulness of this temptation. The elevated language of his heart will be, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Though the terrors of approaching poverty are mustering before me in dark and threatening array, yet will I not be tempted from my integrity. My Saviour would not command the stone to be made bread, because had He done so He would have violated a committed trust. I will not turn a single fragment of my substance to the secret purpose of a provision for my family, because should I do so, I would be violating a commanded duty. Oh, no! I will meet this temptation as my great Exemplar did before me, and I will meet it with His own weapon and His own sentiment—that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Oh! what a fine security does Christian principle confer, for all that is just, and honourable, and of good report! How clearly and commandingly does the line of duty lie before the eye of him who has firmly seated his confidence in God! We have a warrant to pray to Him for daily bread;

and tell me if ever the promise failed of its accomplishment, that as the day came the provision of the day came along with it? To this extent every Christian is warranted to trust in Him; and with such an anchor of security, all distressing anxieties for the morrow should be given to the winds. This is the noble defence which I call on one and all to set up, in that dark hour of their visitation, when they are floundering along through an ocean of many difficulties. "I have been young and now am old," says the Psalmist, "and yet never have I seen the children of the righteous begging their bread." This word proceedeth out of the mouth of God; and be assured, my brethren, that if you hold fast your integrity, you will secure for your children the inheritance of a heavenly Father's blessing, as well as of an earthly father's unsullied name.

I trust, my brethren, that this case brings home to your mind the general principle that no difficulties whatever should tempt you to put forth your hand to a violation of the law of God—that as the Saviour kept rigidly by His trust, you will keep rigidly by your duty; and an unshaken confidence in His word, will, under every temptation of unlawful gain, keep you in steadfast adherence to His will.

Let me now proceed to the moral lesson that may be gathered out of the second recorded attempt of the great adversary (second in Matthew, though third in Luke) of men upon the great Captain of man's salvation. Why, he bade Him, since His trust in God was so great, throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and He would be borne in safety to the ground. Let me explain to you shortly the principle on which our Saviour resisted that temptation. Whatever the situation be in which the will and the providence of God have placed me, such is my confidence in His wisdom, that I will not do an undutiful or an untrustful thing to help myself out of it; but though I trust God, I will not tempt God; I will not, by any wanton and uncalled-for movement on my part, put myself into a situation, in the false hope that He will bear me up and defend me against all the danger of it. I am sure of His wisdom; but I would not have man, in whose behalf it is my office to hold out an example, to be so sure of his own wisdom as to step out of his way, under the false presumption that God will ever be interfering to protect him from the consequences of his own errors and his own temerity; and accordingly, He repelled the instigation of His opponent by the memorable sentence—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Now is there any conceivable case, in the history of human affairs, to which this passage in the example of our Saviour is applicable? Is there any such thing as men being tempted to throw themselves down from the pinnacles on which they are standing? Why, my brethren, I think there is. There is an actual giving way to the second temptation in ordinary life, and among the same men, too, who are most ready to give way to the first temptation. It were not difficult, I think, to prove the consistency of principle which runs through both the answers of our Saviour to the two distinct proposals of His skilful and malicious antagonist. And I think it another proof of this consistency, that the two temptations which our Saviour resisted by one and the same exercise of sentiment, are often yielded to by one and the same individual. To take up my former illustration, does it not often happen, that the same man who is most ready to give way to the excessive spirit of commercial adventure, is the least scrupulous as to the rights of his injured creditors? In the act of turning what is legally and equitably theirs to his own use, he is commanding that to become bread to his family which he has no right to put a finger upon; and in so doing he is giving way to the first temptation. Think not, my brethren, oh, think not, that I pronounce a sentence of sweeping condemnation on the unfortunate; but let me ask, if it does not sometimes happen, that the first temptation assails him only because the second has already been given way to—that had he kept by the safe and the moderate line of his first operations, he would have had all the safety of man who was walking upon sure ground; but this would not

satisfy him, and he threw himself from the actual pinnacle of his standing in society, and plunged into the abyss of some tempting speculation—not with the view of being brought to the earth in safety, it is true, but with the view of being wafted by some gale of prosperity to a higher pinnacle of wealth and of distinction than he before stood upon. You all know, my brethren, the difference between a line that is less, and a line that is more hazardous. I will not pretend to draw the limit between duty and disobedience in this department of human affairs—this must be left to your own experience, and your own prayers for the directing wisdom of God; but surely, surely, my brethren, it is right that you should know in the general how a man may put himself out of the sure track of an humble employment, and by so doing may incur that charge of temerity which you would fasten on the man who threw himself down from a pinnacle—how confidence in one's good fortune may be carried to the length of a blind impetuosity—how the glitter of an ambitious speculation may just have the same effect upon him as if the tempter whispered into his ear that he should throw himself down from the pinnacle on which he was standing, and that he should, by the buoyancy of a prosperous gale, be wafted to a pinnacle of greater height and glory; and how, in giving way to this second temptation, he is not trusting God, but he is trusting to a picture of his own imagination, and tempting God.

I must not dwell too long upon this topic; and will not stop to extract all the instruction that may be gathered out of the interesting passage now before us. Enough that I set your thoughts agoing about it: and if I do so, you will soon perceive, that out of this second temptation there may be gathered a lesson far more general than the one I have now insisted on, viz., that of restraining the spirit of commercial adventure, and leading you to be satisfied on the safer and the humbler ground of your present operations. It goes to establish the general lesson of prudence, amid all the cases and varieties of human life. He is the prudent man who makes his experience of the past guide and enlighten his conduct as to the future. Now, what is the knowledge which his past experience confers upon him? Why, it tells him what is the ordinary course of Providence in such and such circumstances—what is the general method of God's administration in the world—what are the laws of external nature, and what are the general laws of human life, and of the human mind. Now, I can conceive a man of misled and fanatical piety to say—Oh, I have nothing to do with prudence, I have nothing to do with the work of calculating upon appearances, and upon ordinary courses, and upon natural laws and natural tendencies—my confidence is in God. And thus throwing himself loose from all the restraints which bind down the conduct of grave, and calculating, and judicious men, he may expose religion to contempt, and himself to all the mischiefs of blind and unadvised temerity. Now look to the conduct of the Saviour, when asked to throw Himself from a pinnacle of the temple. What was it that restrained Him from doing so? It was just His calculation upon a general law in nature. He acted upon His unfailing experience of the descent of bodies that had no material support to rest upon; and to flee in the face of this law, which the artful deceiver would have persuaded Him to be an act of pious confidence in God, He felt to be a tempting of God, and not a trusting of Him.

Now, my brethren, take this to yourselves. Apply this lesson to other laws, and other of the ordinary and established courses of Providence in the world. Admit experience, and your knowledge of the past, and your general acquaintance with nature and with human life into your calculations on the line of duty; and let me see you exemplify that most respectable of all combinations—the combination of good sense with a most humble and earnest and devoted piety. It is evident that this lesson opens a fine field for the exercise of wisdom; but its applications are far too manifold for being detailed in all their circumstances and in all their variety from the pulpit. What is it that any of you are now hesitating about? Is it about the disposal of one of your family in the

way of settling him in the world? I trust you have it more at heart that he should obtain the bread which endureth than that he should obtain a large portion of that bread which perisheth. Well, you perhaps think that this is your real feeling and principle on the subject; but have you brought prudence and your experience of human life to bear upon the question—what would be the best situation for the endurance and the growth of Christian principle within him? Don't you know what the general laws of nature and of the human mind are in this matter?—that the general effect of exposure is to blast the tender infancy of that principle which you may have put into the youthful bosom—that the general effect of evil communication is to corrupt good manners—that in committing him to the broad surface of a world lying in wickedness, there are some situations which all experience attests to be more adverse to virtue than others? And are you admitting all this into your calculation? or, instead of a single eye upon the eternity of him whose guardianship God hath committed to you, is your single eye fixed on his earthly aggrandizement?—and as to any faint wish you may feel for his being provided on the other side of death with a house that is not made with hands and eternal in the heavens, do you get it all disposed of by bidding God bless him, when the weeping boy takes his departure, and he is followed to the door by the tears and wishes of his family?

Ah! my brethren, if prudence has not gone along with piety, I call upon you not to trust to its fervent aspirations. This young man who is leaving the home of his father, and his heart swelling with every Christian purpose, and all the lessons of a mother's watchful and affectionate jealousy fresh in his bosom, may perhaps, by the ill-judged choice of these very parents, have been set on a career which will bring him back to the mansion of their old age, an alien from his God, and a graceless scorner at every Christian feeling which exists in his family. He may be the object of your daily prayers, and not an evening devotion may be lifted up to heaven without the remembrance of him who is in a distant land; but the tidings of his fall may reach you—and in the melancholy result of a soul irrecoverably lost in wickedness and estrangement from his Maker, you may at length be made to feel what a sad error it was to tempt God, while you thought you were piously and affectionately trusting in Him. This is one out of many applications. The Bible is so pregnant with meaning, that I might linger for months on the wisdom of a single chapter without exhausting it. Ponder its passages. Be assured that the devoted study of a whole life will not carry you to the limit of all that instruction which is to be gathered out of it. It may be your daily exercise; and yet every day some new and wondrous thing may evolve to the mind which humbly commits itself to the guidance of that enlightening Spirit who makes use of the word as His instrument. Let it be your exercise on some portion of every day; and let the remembrance of it be your delight all the day long; and however darkly or awkwardly you may go about the work of applying these Scriptures to your every-day and familiar concerns at the first, by reason of use, and with the blessing of God, your senses will be exercised to discern both the good and the evil.

I trust I may have said enough to convince you of the respect that you owe to the ordinary course of nature and of Providence. Christ has given the sanction of His example to this respect by the answer wherewith he repelled the second instigation of the tempter. He would not cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, because He was aware of the law of gravitation; and He felt that a rash presumption on His part, as if God would interpose to suspend this law on His behalf, would be not to trust God, but to tempt God. In the same manner, my brethren, whatever be the situation you are placed in, the first and the paramount maxim is at all times, and in all circumstances, and in defiance of all hazards, to do that which is your commanded duty; and I have already showed, how our Saviour's treatment of the first recorded temptation could be brought to bear upon this lesson. But, on the other hand, if there is no requirement calling upon you to make

the exposure of yourself to those evils which nature and experience point out to be the consequences of such and such a line of proceeding—then it is a tempting of God to take that line; and therefore it is that a Christian, anxious to know the path in which he should go, will not only learn diligently the will of God as put down in His word, lest he should transgress against God by an act of disobedience, but he will also gather the indications of God's will concerning him from the circumstances in which he finds himself placed, and from the general effect of such circumstances, lest he should tempt God by an act of presumption. Whatever, my brethren, be the actual situation of any man among you, you stand upon safe ground when you say, Here I am by the will of God; and should any inducement be held out for you to change your situation, or should you deliberate upon the question, whether it would be right to make such a change or to adopt such a step—then it is not merely your prudence, but your duty, to make your experience of the past, your acquaintance with the general course of things, to bear upon the question. For this purpose you take a survey of all the circumstances, and you calculate the effect of such and such measures, and you frame your calculation on your recollections of the ordinary processes of nature and experience. Does what I know of my habits make it advisable for me to change my present line of employment, or to continue it? Does what I know of my talent for usefulness tell me that it would be more productively employed in the present field of my exertions, or in another which the course of things has laid before me? Does what I know of the difficulties of one situation and the facilities of another, enable me to make up my mind on the question—whether I ought or ought not to decide upon a transference? These are questions which a man, with no other principle in his bosom but the love of God and the love of men, may sit in deliberation over. They may be the calculations of a wise and reflecting experience; but this does not hinder them from being also the calculations of religious duty. It gives a mighty clearness and command to the question, when he is sitting in judgment over a conjuncture which he did not create himself, but which was brought by the uncontrolled course of events and of circumstances to his door. If he is sure that in no previous step of the affair he has tempted God by any wilful act of his own, then the case that is before him may be taken up as a case presented by God to his notice; and he must have a care, now that it is presented to him, lest he tempt God by deciding the matter in opposition to the light of experience, or the established courses of nature and of providence. My object in all this, my brethren, is to reconcile you to a language which some hold to be fanatical. You may have read or heard of people trying to find out what were the leadings of providence in a given case, and to collect the will of God from a deliberate survey of the circumstances by which they were surrounded. Now, my brethren, I maintain that it is a very high point of Christian wisdom to decide this question; and it is a question upon which the most grave, and diligent, and I will also say it, the most judicious exercises of thought have been bestowed. It is very true that it is a wisdom which the world knoweth not, and into which the men of the world cannot enter; and when they hear of a call, or a leading of providence, they conceive the idea of a direct inspiration, and that the man who professes to act upon such a call has dreamed a dream, or seen a vision, or heard the utterance of a voice, or felt an impulse upon his imagination and his heart. There is nothing of all this, my brethren, in these matters. The man does no more than give God the homage of being the author of all that actually is, and he ascribes his present circumstances, and inducements, and prospects, to the will of God. He knows that it is his duty to pray for wisdom, and in everything to make his requests known unto God; but he expects no supernatural intimation upon the subject—he only brings all the wisdom he has gotten to bear on the question of whether it will be most for usefulness to take this one step or that other step. In deliberating on this question, so far from overlooking the natural and accustomed tendencies

of things, he makes them the groundwork of his calculation. He is not so presumptuous as to expect that God will change the course or suspend the laws of nature for his special behoof, and so he feels that it would be as much tempting God to act in opposition to any of the known laws, whether of matter or of mind, or to any one of the established connections between means and their ends—as our Saviour would have felt that He had been tempting God had He been acting in opposition to the known law of the descent of heavy and unsupported bodies. All this he deliberates upon lest he should throw himself from the pinnacle of safety; and thus it is, my brethren, that, in attempting to decide what are the leanings of Providence, he who is derided by the world for the weaknesses of a superstitious fancy, may in fact have combined all the judgment and intelligence and respectable accomplishments of a discerning and clear-sighted man, with all the devotedness of a humble and submissive piety.

Verses 5–8.—"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This, of course, was no illusion of the fancy. We mistake the matter if we think that our Saviour did not feel the force of these various temptations. Had He not done so, He would not have been in all points tempted like as we are. We do not understand the nature of the union between the divine and human natures of Christ. We must just take what we find upon this subject, and limit our curiosity by the amount of that which is written. And this much is certain, that He suffered being tempted—He had all the pain of a struggle to undergo; and it was by obedience in the face of difficulty, it was by a high and sustained exercise of principle in the face of allurements—and had the allurements not been felt, there would have been no exercise at all in the work of resisting them—it was, I say, by the force of dutiful sentiment rising superior to all that the tempter and the world could muster up to oppose it, that He earned the reward of righteousness for us, and obtained a highly exalted name which we are at all times invited to make use of in our prayers, and are told that if we do so they shall rise to the Father, who hath placed the Son on His right hand, with acceptance and success. Take this view of the matter then—that our Saviour actually felt the force of the allurement; and I think that much practical instruction is to be gathered from the way in which He repelled this temptation of the adversary. Does it appear from these verses that he stopped to gaze on the splendid field of contemplation before Him? Did He suffer His thoughts to linger on the beauties of that airy spectacle by which he was surrounded? Did he enter into a deliberate process of calculation, or hesitate for a moment between the call of duty to God and an act of homage to God's presumptuous rival, on the rendering of which all the glory which dazzled so magnificently around Him was offered to gratify and to reward Him? No, my brethren, he does not appear to have ventured Himself with the power of this alluring representation for a single moment. All the strength of His hitherto unconquered nature—all the knowledge He had of the deceitfulness of the tempter—all the consciousness which one would think He might have possessed that the promise of Satan was but a mockery—all this did not embolden Him to the measure of looking for one minute to the vision of loveliness and of grandeur that was thrown around Him; but with all the jealousy of quick and instantly conceived alarm, does he by one summary act dismiss the whole of the flattering temptation away from Him: Get you hence, Satan; I cannot entertain your proposal for a single moment; and with a quotation from Scripture, the very measure by which he repelled

every former assault, does He tell him that He must worship the Lord His God, and Him only He must serve.

This part of the example of our Saviour gives a mighty reinforcement to a prudential lesson often set forth in Scripture respecting the management of temptations. If He would not trifle or delay or make any parrying with temptation, how much more incumbent is it upon us to be prompt and decisive in our measures with it? If even the mighty Captain of our salvation would not trust Himself with the indulgence of that superb spectacle that was so much fitted to regale the imagination, how much more ought we to dismiss from our hearts the countless vanities that are ever obtruding themselves and offering to take possession of the inner man? Let us suit our proceedings to the mediocrity of our powers. Let us conceive quick and sudden and decisive alarm at every approach of every temptation. Be assured, my friends, that it is far safer to dismiss than to tarry with it. Entertain not the deceitful suggestion for a single moment; but recovering the mind to the tone of principle, by an instantaneous reference to the will of God, and the obligations that you owe Him, dismiss every evil instigation by the sentiment that thou must worship the Lord thy God, and Him only thou must serve.

If this were the habit of the mind, what a mighty safeguard against temptations you would carry about with you in a world that is full of them. Your tempter does not appear to you in a personal form; but his agency on your hearts is not the less real on that account—nor is the answer less applicable from your mouth than it was from the mouth of the Saviour, Get thee hence, Satan. Rebuke the evil suggestion away from you. Let the mind, by the summary act of that authority which belongs to it, dismiss from its inner chambers every tempting thought, every rising inclination to sin; and while you are called upon to keep your eyes with all diligence from viewing vanity, I also call upon you to keep your hearts with all diligence from dwelling upon vanity. I do not know a single practical direction that you would find of more use for keeping you from what is evil; and we are told that we should cease to do evil, ere we can learn to do well. I know not a more efficient lesson for carrying along with you from the very commencement of the good work of sanctification, and for supporting you through the whole of its subsequent stages. Do, my brethren, act upon it from this moment. Think of the quick and instantaneous movement by which our Saviour put the whole of that bright and glittering illusion away from Him, which formed the grand conclusive attempt of the adversary to seduce Him from His principles. Go, and do likewise. Keep no measures with temptation. Your safety lies in shunning, and in shutting it out, and in dismissing it from your thoughts. When any gay or flattering imagination gets hold of you—be it wealth, to seduce you from your integrity, or to withdraw you from the present path of your humble and sober-minded, but safe and cautious employments, to some track of ruinous ambition—or be it pleasure, to steal your heart to some object of idolatrous affection—or be it fashion, to tempt you to some act of unlawful conformity to a world lying in wickedness — think, my brethren, of your calling—you are the servants of the Lord; and be ever ready to dismiss the evil suggestion with the answer—I must worship the Lord my God, and Him only I must serve.

Thus much for temptation in the general. But let me say a few words on the particular temptation that is here recorded. One might think that it would be difficult to find a parallel to this temptation in the familiar and every-day history of men—that for this purpose it would be necessary to go to him who stands on the very pinnacle of human society—to the single man of the world, before whom lieth the avenue which promises to conduct him by some strides of mighty and unprincipled violence to universal monarchy. Such a man there lately was, who aspired after all the glory of all the kingdoms upon earth; and in the track of his guilty ambition many, and very many, were the acts of homage which he rendered to the god of this world.

In the history of this man, we see at once the power of Satan's temptations and the treachery of his promises; but we mistake it if we think that the passage of our Saviour's history which is now before us does not admit of a wider application. The enlightened Discerner of the human heart will perceive the identity of its passions under all the variety of rank and of circumstances. To regale the appetite for distinction, it is not necessary that man should aspire above the level of this widely extended world: it is enough that he gain an eminence above the level that is immediately around him. His own confined neighbourhood may be all that he knows, and to him it is just as animating a field of ambition as the world is to the mighty conqueror; and therefore, in the very humblest walks of society we may behold the busy working of the same pride, and the same passion, and the same keen and interested rivalship, and the same ardent struggle for superiority, that we read of in the higher game of victory and of empire. And thus it is that the temptation of glory may be carried down to the very basis of society. Men measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves; and thus it is that when walking the streets, we may behold the gait and bearing of conscious elevation among the most tattered of our labourers, as well as among the wealthiest of our citizens—for pride may dwell in a cottage as well as in a palace. It sits on the workman's bench as well as on the monarch's throne, and struts driving a flock of sheep as well as at the head of a victorious army.

But in all these cases, the glory we aspire after is a glory we seek from one another. It is the notice, and the homage, and the admiration of men. It is not the glory that cometh from God only; but in giving way to it, we make an idolatrous defection from the great God of heaven and of earth; and to make good this defection, the god of this world plies all his artifices, and brings the flattering prospect of distinction to play upon our fancy, and arrays the perishable splendours of earth with a charm and a stability which do not belong to them; and throws into the far and distant back-ground of our contemplations the certainty of that death which, in a few short years, will blow to pieces the whole of his glittering infatuation, and the loathsomeness of that grave of which one and all of us must be the dumb and the mouldering occupiers. Oh! how many resign themselves to his flattering illusions, and crowd the broad way in pursuit of them! And, keenly driven along by some airy spectre, the sight of which inflames their ambition, there is no room in the hearts but for the employment of following after it; and the will of God, and the service of God, and the worship of God, are all trampled upon and renounced in the daily and hourly incense which they offer to some cheating idol of this world. Money, which purchaseth all things, purchaseth distinction also; and this forms the most frequent and powerful instrument by which the great adversary seduces his thousands and tens of thousands from their loyalty to the God of heaven. With this he bribes the vanity of the young in the shape of costly and glittering ornaments—and who can tell how many have been betrayed by the power of this temptation into the surrender of that most graceful of all ornaments—that unsullied purity which when cruelly pressed and prevailed upon has often turned her who was at one time the pride and the promise of a parent's old age into a shame and a bitterness which have brought down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. With this he has turned the commercial world into one vortex of driving and impetuous rivalship; and though it be well that each should put forth the might of his hand to the bidden duty of providing for the things of his own house, yet it is not well if, in the pursuit of a keen and straining ambition, simplicity and godly sincerity have been banished from the transactions of business—it is not well if the seducing object of a commanding fortune and a princely retirement, which lies in the vista of futurity before him, shall tempt him to a life of perpetual homage to the glory and good of this world—it is not well if the prospect of some earthly eminence, from which the hand of death will so soon pull him down, shall be

spread before him with all the gay coloring of a painted screen, to hide from his view the unfading glories of eternity. And surely, surely, my brethren, if glosses and plausibilities and dexterous concealments of the truth to secure the advantage in a present bargain, or give a favourable turn to the present negotiation—if there be any of you, my friends, (and I pray there may be none,) who have so far fallen from the lofty principles of a pure and unbending integrity, as to think that all these may be looked upon with levity and connivance, and that the communications of yea, yea, and nay, nay, when heard in the market-place are to be laughed at as the oddities of Quakerism—why, my brethren, in this case I must say that you are not walking as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth—that you have got among the wiles and entanglements of him who is the arch-enemy of human souls, by whose fascinations it is that you are as effectually surrounded by the mockery of an ideal representation, as the mind of our Saviour when the panorama of a brilliant and alluring world was spread before his contemplation: and you, in pursuit of some airy castle which you may never reach, and which at all events you must soon abandon for the coldness and corruption of the sepulchre, are doing homage to the father of lies, and strewing the altar of his idolatry with those offerings of the ruined soul and its undone eternity, which he exacts from his worshippers.

I cannot bring my observations on this wonderful passage of the Bible to a close without remarking that one harmonious lesson may be gathered out of the three temptations by which our Saviour was assailed. The first is, that no prospect however terrifying, no pain however urgent, no suffering however intense, shall tempt me to do that which is undutiful and against the will of God, for the purpose of escaping the evils of that situation in which I actually find myself. Duty must be done at all hazards—the law of God must be acted upon at every venture—I must not, by any deed of mine, try to help myself out of any distress by the violation of any of the commandments; and under every temptation, the most pressing that can be conceived, it is my part to obey God though He should multiply upon me the severest dispensations, and to trust Him though He should slay me. Conceive a man, then, in a given line of employment, and under temptations to take the advantage which others take, and to alleviate the difficulties of his situation by resorting to the same habits and practices of dishonesty which are frequent among others; and, if acting on the moral to be drawn from the first of the three temptations, he will struggle with every hardship rather than surrender one iota of his integrity to soften them, and putting his confidence in God, will say, that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of His mouth. But you will say, though he should do no dishonest thing to make his present situation a comfortable and productive one, might not he change that situation—might not he give up the present, with all its certain evils, for another which, for anything he knows, might be free from the hardships that are now pressing upon him? Might not he speculate, and experiment, and venture on some bold and decisive steps to have himself extricated from his present degree of poverty or inconvenience or suffering? Now, if he act on the moral that is to be gathered out of the second temptation, he will make this a question of prudence—he will no more commit himself to uncertainty in the face of known principle, of experience, than our Saviour committed Himself to the air in the face of the known law of gravity—he will mingle the caution of wisdom and of observation with all his deliberations upon this subject; nor by calculating upon any wanton or hazardous enterprise, will he offer to tempt the Lord his God. Now, graft upon these two morals the one that is to be gathered from the third and last temptation, and you will moderate to nothing a man's ambition about a place of eminence and distinction in society. It is very true that on him may be performed, or on him there may not be performed, the truth of the saying—that the hand of the diligent maketh rich; but riches are not what his heart is set upon. He looks to another home, and his eye is

filled with the splendours of another inheritance. He acts on the great though simple prospect of eternity; and on the whole you behold a man giving himself to the faithful and diligent and high-principled discharge of all the duties which belong to the line that Providence has assigned to him, and making no rash or unadvised attempts to change it. His heart is free from that ambition after the glories or the distinctions of this world which pierceth man through with many sorrows, and has blasted many a precious influence of the word of God, by the cares of life on the one hand, or the deceitfulness of riches on the other. Such, my brethren, I conceive to be the clear line of duty that lies on every individual, and I leave it to you to conceive what a Christian and good and orderly aspect it would throw over the face of the country, were this to become the practical and the universal moral of all its people—were the unbridled rage of commercial enterprise to be tempered by the lessons of this passage. We would see less of goading ambition for a high eminence of wealth among the citizens, and less of that blind and impetuous and miscalculating confidence which tempts so many to acts of desperation, and less of that relaxation of principle and virtue that leads to so many a splendid and guilty, and at length shipwrecked enterprise, signalized by the ruin of many families, while another phœnix with gay and golden plumage rises from the ashes of the devouring conflagration.

SERMON XXII.

*The Embassy of Reconciliation.**

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Corinthians v. 20.

In the prosecution of the following discourse, I shall first consider the entreaty of the text—"Be ye reconciled unto God," as addressed to you by the beseeching voice of a fellow-mortal; and in the second place, I shall consider the warrant given to him by God to address you in this manner—and in virtue of which warrant it is not only he who beseeches you, but God, or Christ, the Son of God, who beseeches you by Him,—"As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."

Let me, then, in the first place, consider this entreaty of the text as coming upon you through the beseeching voice of a fellow-mortal. It came in this shape from the mouth of Paul to the people whom he addressed in this epistle. It comes in this shape from the mouth of a Christian parent to those children for whose eternal salvation he is bound to labour, and to put forth his every power of earnest and affectionate exhortation. It comes in this shape from one friend to another, in that highest exercise of friendship, when man presses upon his fellow the care of his eternity. And it comes in this shape at the moment in which I am now addressing you, when, knowing as I do that there is an offer within the reach of one and all of you, the neglect of which will sink you into endless and unutterable wo, and the acceptance of which will invest you with all the splendours and all the ever-during felicities of Paradise—I urge it upon your consideration in all its magnitude and in all its seriousness. I call upon you to come out from the wretched alienation of nature—to give up your enmity against that Being who has your fate and your fortune in His hand, the word of whose power can crush you into annihilation, or transfer you to that awful region where each unrepentant sinner shall take up his bed in hell, and a

* Preached in the Calton, Glasgow, 15th February, 1815.

blackening despair spreads itself over the whole multitude of the damned, because that each and all of them know that a whole eternity of vengeance is in store for them. Ah! my brethren, knowing, as every true minister of the gospel does, that all who refuse the overtures of the gospel are speeding their certain way to this scene of gloomy and interminable suffering; and knowing farther, that all of them have pardon within the reach of their offer, and repentance within the reach of their call, and the Spirit to strengthen them for the work of repentance within the reach of their prayers, and eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, within the reach of their acceptance—how is it possible in these circumstances, unless he had a heart cruel as death and hard as the nether millstone, how is it possible that he can refrain from pouring all the tenderness of his sympathy upon them, from knocking at the door of every bosom, and praying them to mind the things which belong to their peace? and should he have already set before them the terrors of the law, how can he refrain from telling them that these terrors are only in reserve then for those of them who refuse His kindness now—that their full terror and severity are to be discharged in the other world only on those of them who in this world turn from the tenderness of his entreating voice; but that the time in which he is now standing among them is the accepted time, that the day on which he is now preaching to them is a day of salvation? It is thus impossible that any minister who feels as he ought can abstain from doing among his hearers what Paul did before him, from beseeching them even in his own name, and with the anxiety that he feels for them in his own heart, to be reconciled unto God.

But, my brethren, there is no need of any reconciliation among two parties if there is no quarrel between them; and you may perhaps ask—what is the quarrel between you and God? Who is it among you, I would ask in return, that puts this question? Is it possible that the thief can put this question in the face of a commandment so pointed and so intelligible as this—Thou shalt not steal? Is it possible that the swearer can put this question in the face of a threat so plain and so appalling as this—The Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain? Is it possible that the Sabbath-breaker can put such a question as implies him not to be conscious of any quarrel that God can possibly have with him, in the face of the commandment uttered in thunder from Mount Sinai—Thou shalt sanctify the Sabbath-day, and keep it holy? Is it possible that the liar can put such a question in the face of that solemn charge delivered by God Himself against false witness? Is it possible that the drunkard or unclean person can put such a question when, in the book of Revelation, it is expressly said that all such shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone? And once for all, how is it possible that each or any of these can ever take it into their heads that God has no quarrel with them in the face of the testimony handed down to us by the holy apostle about the works of the flesh—a testimony delivered in language too plain to be put away, when he says of adultery, and fornication, and uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and hatred, and strife, and drunkenness, and revellings, and such like, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? I cannot conceive, then, that a man guilty of any one of these things should have any doubt of God having a quarrel with him—should have any doubt of its being necessary, in order to obtain the friendship of God, that this quarrel be made up by an act of reconciliation—should have any doubt that some great movement must be made by him in the matters of religion ere he die;—and that unless the offer of the gospel be taken by him—and no man does take this offer who does not forsake his sins and betake himself to a thorough course of repentance and new obedience—I say, I do not feel that I stand under any necessity of convincing these that there is at this moment a breach between them and God. I am sure that if they are not seared as with a red-hot iron, they

will not leave off the consideration of what I am now urging without their consciences rising upon them and charging them with their enmity against God; and upbraiding them with their acts of wickedness in the past time of their lives; and whispering to them on the bed of restlessness where they lie, that if they follow not the call of reconciliation which has been sounded in their ears, they are treasuring up to themselves a more furious wrath and a heavier condemnation. Yes! and let this conscience make them as uneasy as it may, it is but the foretaste of that coming hell where there is a fire that is never quenched, and the corrosion of a tormenting worm that never dies.

But, my brethren, the men whom I am most desirous of convincing at present that there is a real quarrel between them and God, and a real necessity for an act of reconciliation to make the quarrel up, are those who can say with the young man in the Gospel—My conscience does not upbraid me with any of these offences: I am not a drunkard, I am not a thief. I am not a frequenter of any of the haunts of profligacy: I attend ordinances, and there is a decency that spreads itself over the whole of my Sabbath history; I give what I can afford to my poorer brethren, and I am neither an extortioner nor an adulterer, even as some others who are standing beside me, and on whom let the charge of the minister light—for to them, and not to me, does it apply. Now, what I maintain—and I am anxious to make you all understand it—is, that there is not a human being on the face of the earth—there is not a single individual of all its families—there is not one solitary descendant among the generations of the fallen Adam, who, if he have not obeyed the call of my text, is not at this moment at open war with the God who created him. Your conscience may not upbraid you with any of the visible transgressions which I have now enumerated in your hearing. A sense of decency may keep you from them—the natural feeling of what is becoming and upright may keep you from them—the fear of disgrace, or a constitutional delicacy of sentiment, may keep you from them: but still the quarrel remains with God—if it is not love to Him, and a principle of submission to His law, and such a sense of His authority as reaches to the very thoughts and desires and affections of the inner man that keep you from them. You, my brethren, if you are not in Christ—if you have never known what it is to be reconciled to God through Him—if you are strangers to His atonement, and to the influences of His promised grace—the distinct charge I bring against one and all of you—let one man be more decent than his neighbour, and more sober than his neighbour, and more honest than his neighbour as he may—the distinct charge I have to make, and I refer to your own consciences whether the charge be a true one or not, is, that you want this love to God—you do not possess this principle of submission to His law in all things—you have not by nature such a sense of His authority as reaches the thoughts and desires and affections of the inner man. In many outward things you may be better than your neighbours, and your conduct be free from those disgraceful outbreakings which give to men the character of being the lowest and the most profligate in society; but I lay it to your consciences, that though such polluted streams as those do not come out of your hearts, it is only because the channels through which they would run are dammed up by other restraints than by love to God and a regard to the honour of the Lawgiver. In spite of all these restraints, the fountain is polluted—the heart is evil—you have no taste for God—you, every hour of the day, forget God, and prove how little you care for him. You care for other things more than you care for Him. What these other things are will differ among different individuals—just as idolaters sometimes worship one idol and sometimes another. What the idol is which steals your affections from your lawful Master, I know not: it may be the deceitful wiles of this world among capitalists and thriving tradesmen; it may be the love of distinction among those of most strength and most fame and most talent among you; it may be the vanity of a fine appearance among menservants; it may be the vanity of dress

among maid-servants; what the precise thing is I know not; but whatever it is, there are thousands against whose characters the world can allege nothing, but who suffer some idol, some vanity, some earthly and perishable object, to take away their affections from God. Whatever the thing be, their heart is with that thing, and not with God. God, who says, Give me thy heart, is robbed of His dues. He sees His children altogether taken up with His gifts, and altogether thinking not and caring not about the Giver. Their affections are after another object than God—their desire is towards another house than that place where His honour dwelleth. Give them all they wish for on this side of the grave, and the other side of the grave—to which, whether they will or not, they are so fast hastening—takes up scarce any of their attention at all, and they are never easier that when they are never thinking of it. This, my brethren, is the description of the great bulk and majority of this world's population. I am not saying that they are all notorious, and profligate, and disreputable characters; but I am saying that they are forgetters of God; and just as if He had no existence at all, do they walk after the counsel of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes.

Now, my brethren, do you call this a trifle? Did you never think there was anything so very bad and so very enormous in all this? I am sure you would think and feel it to be no trifle at all, did you just get the same treatment from another that you give to the God who formed you. Did any of you feed a neighbour, and clothe him, and give him every one article of maintenance; and after all you had done for him, did you come to the knowledge that this said neighbour—quite happy in eating your bread, and in wearing your raiment, and in making use of all the comforts and necessaries you bestowed upon him—did not at the same time carry in his heart the slightest regard to you the giver of all this. Did you come to know, that, so far from this, he made no scruple of just doing what he liked best himself, and asked not and cared not what it was that you would like him to do. Did you come to know that he could not bear the thoughts of you, and was never in greater ease of mind than when he drove you out of his recollections altogether.—Why, you would think this hard treatment indeed, from the man who lived because you furnished him with all the means of living, who was kept up in a decent appearance among his neighbours because you supplied him with all that he stood in need of, who got from you the food that sustained him, and the clothing that covered him, and the fuel that warmed him, and the house that lodged him. Well, then, just give the same fair dealing to God. Is it not hard, and exceeding hard—will it not appear a foul and unnatural crime in the high records of heaven—will the pure eye of angels who love God, and delight to serve Him, not see it to be a great and a crying deformity in every one of your characters, that God should give you every breath, should minister to you every comfort, should hold you in life, and in all that is necessary to life, and that you all the while, with your forms of prayer, and your decency of ordinances, and your being as good or better than your neighbours, and some few such points and accomplishments of character as these, should at the same time give God no place in your hearts, and have all your affections turned in dislike, or at least in indifference, away from Him?

I can assure you, my brethren, that whatever you may think of this, God Himself thinks it no trifle to be treated in this manner. He claims your love, He requires it—He says that forgetfulness of Him is one of the most hell-deserving crimes in the awful catalogue of human guilt—He expressly says, in the book of Psalms, that the nations who forget Him shall be turned into hell; and He bids you consider, ye who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. This is the quarrel, my brethren, between God and man; and there is not a single individual of the species, who, if he remain what nature made him, is not included in it. "There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God." This is the mighty burden

of the controversy He has with you—this is the breach between Him and the sinful creatures He has formed—this the awful gulf of separation that cuts off every one of us from the Father of our spirits; and to you whom I am now addressing, to every one of you who are still strangers to the faith of the gospel, and have not sought, and have not found, all your peace with the Lawgiver, through Jesus Christ our Lord—I say that to you there is a most pressing need of reconciliation; I beseech you to take to it immediately.

If on some night of darkness I met the friend of my heart walking the road which led to a precipice, I should tell him of his danger, and point out the safe direction for him to take himself to. If he refused to hear me, I should repeat to him my earnest assurances of his danger. If he would not believe me, I should insist with all the tones of truth and tenderness. If he persisted in his obstinacy, I would positively attempt to force him away from the path he was walking in. If I was not strong enough, I would fall on my knees to him—I would try to overpower him by my entreaties and my warnings—I would do all that friendship could do to turn him from his infatuation; nor would I leave him till either I had accomplished my purpose, or he had fallen a victim to his rashness and his folly. In like manner does the Christian minister open his eyes upon the people whom he addresses. In this dark world the road to heaven is often not perceived, and not walked in. Christ says—"I am the way; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved. Let him believe my testimony—let him listen to my calls—let him submit himself to my gospel—let him make himself over to me, as the Saviour whose blood has redeemed him, and whose Spirit if he pray for it in faith, will renew him and make him meet for the inheritance. Let him do this, and he is reconciled unto God, and set on the only way to a happy eternity." Well, then, does the ambassador of Christ see any of you in this way? fulfilling the desires of your own hearts—laying up for the world, and making no provision for that eternity which is coming so rapidly upon you—continuing in your iniquities, instead of turning from them unto Chirst—building yourselves up in the deceitful security that you will get to heaven with a few moral decencies, that make you pass in society with a character as fair and as respectable as that of your neighbours around you, at the very time that God is forgotten, and His love has no operation within you, and His way of salvation by His Son is not acknowledged or walked in, and His law, however much it may be fulfilled in some external points, is not present to the heart, and brings not the whole body, soul, and spirit to the captivity of His obedience. If this be the situation of any who now hears me, then has your minister a right to say that you are walking in a miserably wrong way, and to beg that you will no longer walk in it. Turn ye, turn ye to the direction of safety; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. This is the only name given under heaven. If this name be not cordially embraced—if you do not rest for salvation upon him—if you do not build your hope of forgiveness upon His sacrifice—if the faith that is in you do not work a good evidence to the operation of that Spirit which is promised to all who believe, to turn them from all sin, and lead them to the love and the practice of all righteousness;—if this be indeed your state, you are out of the way—you are still in the dangerous situation of being unreconciled to God. In this situation your minister meets with you, and Sabbath after Sabbath you are within the reach of his hearing, and he tells you of your danger. He looks upon you as his friends and acquaintances; and how, I ask you, can he bear it—that people whom he meets every day on the road—people whom he calls upon in their houses—people with whom he should like to exchange visits—people whose health and prosperity he rejoices in, and whose sickness or misfortunes would give him pain;—how can he bear to think that they should be walking, and not be warned of it, in the broad way which leadeth to destruction?

Shall he feel a sympathy for the little ailments and calamities of this life, and

shall he stand unmoved when he sees you, by your indifference to the truth, by your neglect of the great salvation, by your resistance of every offer to be reconciled to God in Christ, walking so miserably astray and running on the path that leads to evil, and heaping up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? It may be often, or it may be seldom, that your minister and you meet with each other; but when you do meet, it is on terms of peace and civility—every appearance of cordiality in your salutations, and every appearance of kindness in your mutual compliments and inquiries. How, then, can he bear to see any of you posting with all speed to a condemned and undone eternity? Though he should himself get to the heaven he is aspiring after, is that any reason why he should tolerate the idea of you, my friends, persisting in enmity with God—of the hell that will be your portion, and the gulf of everlasting separation that will then be placed between him and you? It were only the want of faith which could make him sit at ease under a contemplation so painful as the one that I am now presenting; but knowing, as he does, the awful realities of the other world, he were untrue to his Master's cause if he did not bring every engine to bear upon you; and though with a voice more tender than human sympathy ever prompted, he called on you from this pulpit to turn and be reconciled—though he went from house to house, and with all earnestness beseeched you to be reconciled—though he fell on his knees before you, and entreated you with tears to mind the things which belong to your peace lest they be forever hid from your eyes—he would just be doing what Paul did before him, when he prayed his people in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God.

You will observe, my brethren, that if God refused to receive those who call upon Him—if He still stood out on the dignity of His law, and said, I will not come to terms with those who have broken and insulted it—if there was any unwillingness on His part to make it up with you—then it might be vain for me, or for any minister, to call on the one party to be reconciled, while the other party would not admit of reconciliation. But this is not the state of the case; God is willing. He Himself made and proclaimed the way of return by which sinners have free access to His throne; and all who will are invited to come and drink of the waters of life freely. Christ, the way, is offered unto all; and it was God who so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Go not, then, to charge God with unwillingness to be reconciled. The want of willingness is on your part, and not upon His. Come unto Him through the appointed Mediator. I beseech you to do so. Take to the faith and the following of Christ, and you are safe. If your reconciliation to God have not yet been made, it is because you are unwilling. The unwillingness lies with you; and do not charge it upon God, who calls on every one of you to repent, and be reconciled, and live—who swears by Himself that He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner—who, for the very purpose of delivering you from this death, sent you a mighty Redeemer, who gave this account of Himself, that He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. By Him the ransom of iniquity is paid, and a way of acceptance is opened, and everything is made clear with God, and there is free access to Him through a Mediator; and I again pray you in Christ's stead, that ye be reconciled unto God.

I have left myself little time for the second head of discourse, in which I was to lay it before you, that while I beseeched you with my own voice, God beseeched you by me. It is He who has given the warrant for all this free and earnest invitation. My urgency on this subject is the urgency of Him who has commissioned me to present to you the word of this great salvation. I am only the instrument of God in this matter; and what I want to press upon you is, that He, the mighty Sovereign of heaven and of earth, is at this moment employed, through His ministers and His Bibles, not merely in threatening, not merely in commanding, not merely in issuing His solemn proclamations

from hence, that all men should repent; but, more wonderful and more affecting than all this, He puts Himself forth in the attitude of beseeching you to be reconciled. He feels toward you all the longing anxiety of a father bereaved of his children, and He implores your return to Him. He beckons your approach to Him—He waves the signal of a most gracious and willing invitation, and says, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." He tries to soften the sinner's heart by the tenderness of His imploring voice, and prays him to be reconciled.

And be assured, my brethren, that however much I beseech you, however earnestly I have your salvation at heart, however anxiously I implore you to return from the way of hostility against God, to the way of friendship and of peace with Him—be assured that I fall far short of the earnestness, and sincerity, and anxious desire after you of my Master, Christ Jesus. He is invisible in the heavens; but it is your part, though you see Him not, to believe in Him; and it is only the want of belief that can take away from the force of this affecting argument. Were He to appear in person amongst you, vested with the whole power of heaven and earth, mighty to save, and entreating you to return, and to take to Him as your Redeemer, and to be reconciled unto God, who, if you believe in Christ, will not impute unto you your trespasses—I say, were He to do all this, could you possibly stand out against such powerful entreaties and solicitations? And what else, then, is it but the want of faith which makes you to refuse me now, when you have not Christ in person to entreat you? If you really believed that He was in heaven, and that He was there managing for the interests of all who put their trust in Him, and that He was carrying on a government upon earth, and employing ministers and Bibles as agents for gaining subjects to His kingdom, and for turning perishing sinners to the love and obedience of His Gospel, then would you feel that it was not I who beseeched you, but Christ who beseeched you by me. Now, I call on you to believe this. On the authority of my text I call you—Christ speaketh there, and what he utters is an actual prayer to you, that you would be reconciled unto God. And what is more, God speaketh there—I and the Father am one, says the Saviour; and such is the unity of mind and of purpose between them, that a call from Christ is a call from God. And accordingly, what do we read in the text? God beseeching you—the Lord of heaven and earth descending to beseech you—He whom you have so deeply offended, whom in the past time of your lives you have forgotten every hour, whose holy law you have trampled upon and put far away from you—He before whom you stand with a load of sins calling for vengeance, in what situation does the text represent Him? The mighty God who fills all space, and reigns in majesty over all worlds, standing at the door of the sinner's heart, humbling Himself to the language of entreaty, beseeching the sinner to come and be reconciled to Him, begging for admittance, and protesting that if you only come unto Him through Christ, He is willing to forgive all, and to forget all. Oh! my brethren, ought not this to encourage you? Yes! and if you refuse the encouragement, it ought also to fill you with terror. The terrors of the Lord are doubtless sometimes preached to you, and I am now preaching to you the goodness and the tenderness of the Lord; but be assured that this goodness, so far from setting aside the terrors, will, if despised and rejected by you, give them their tenfold aggravation. Oh! what an awful weight of condemnation it brings on a sinner's head, that he persists in his iniquities in the face of so much goodness—in the face of all the opportunities that are held out to him of obtaining pardon for the whole guilt of the past, and strength for the whole reformation of the future—in the face of the repeated calls with which God, by His Bibles and His ministers, is at all times plying him. And be most certain, my brethren, that if this gospel be not the savour of life to you, it will be the savour of death to you. It will add to the weight of your reckoning that you have sinned, and persisted in sin, and kept in a state of re-

bellion against your Maker, in the midst of despised warnings and slighted invitations, and unheeded encouragements, and neglected opportunities. Happy those who are constrained by all this encouragement; but what will become of those who reject it? What will become of you, if the call and entreaty I have now sounded in your ears shall be found to have had no influence upon you? Look forward to the day of judgment. and when the high matters of God and man are reasoned over there, tell me which of the two shall have the plea upon their side? Tell me what you can possibly say then, if you refuse now the voice of a God beseeching you to be reconciled? You must stand in silence and confusion; but He will be justified when He speaketh, and be clear when he judgeth—"I proclaimed a law, and you brake it; I appointed a Mediator, and you refused him; I knocked at the door of your hearts, and you gave me no admittance; I beseeched you to be reconciled, and you turned away from me." Oh! hold out no longer, my brethren! Harden not your hearts as in the provocation! Stay not till a more convenient season. Listen to Him now, I say, and make not your hard and impenitent hearts still more hard and more impenitent by refusing Him.

And now, my brethren, what use are you to make of all this that has now been delivered in your hearing? Often, it is to be presumed, has your minister urged the terrors of the Lord upon you; and let me tell you with all earnestness, that if you keep on the ground of rebellion against God, or even forgetfulness of him, you are on ground, where if death find you, it will hurry you into the presence of an incensed Lawgiver, from whence you will pass into the dreary and interminable sufferings of a hopeless eternity; and who is there among you stout-hearted enough to dwell with the devouring fire? who of you can choose to lie down amongst everlasting burnings? But I have this day told you more than this.—I have attempted to assure you, that God has no pleasure in so awful a catastrophe; and while you are in the land of living men, he plies you with the calls to return, and with the assurances of pardon. He is willing at this moment to receive every one of you: He holds out His Son as a propitiation for the sins that are past: He invites you to come and have all the guilt of your manifold iniquities washed out in the blood of the Lamb: He has already given His son for you; and as He has done so much, He is still ready to do more—to give you through that Son a full forgiveness, and an abundant supply of the Spirit, and the effectual washing of regeneration, and such a renewal by the power of the Holy Ghost, as will make you from this time forward hate all sin, and aspire after the love and the practice of all righteousness. How is it possible that you can stand unmoved under the power of an argument so touching? Do you know the situation you occupy? Do you know that death, which has already swept away so many generations from the face of the world, will in a few little years make sure work of every one of you, and lay you side by side in the sepulchres of loneliness and corruption? What are you about, ye living men, that you are so losing time, and so throwing your opportunities away from you, and so keeping wedded to this wretched world that is soon to be burnt up, and to those pleasures of sin which are but for a season, and will leave nothing but remorse and painfulness behind them? Do you remember the parable of the fig-tree, on which fruit was sought and no fruit was found, and it was proposed that it should be cut down, for why should it cumber the ground which it occupied? But the proposal was put off for a little time; and it was dressed, and dug about, and had manure put around it—and for another year it was left alone, that if it should bear fruit, good and well, but if not, then let it be cut down. And this, my brethren, is the interesting point at which you stand. You are still let alone; and God has given you health and opportunity to come within the reach of another invitation; and the arguments of the gospel have once more been applied to your consciences; and you have no pretext whatever for not stirring yourselves, for God has declared

His perfect willingness to receive every one of you, if you come unto Him in faith and in repentance. And should there be no fruit from all these repeated applications—should all the earnestness that has been spent upon you have been given to the wind—should the word heard be like the water spilt upon the ground, and have fallen without efficacy on hearts blinded by the god of this world, and utterly indisposed to abandon its vanities and its pleasures—should the voice lifted up in your hearing fall as fruitlessly on your ears as the voice lifted up in a wilderness—then, my brethren, for anything you know, the last experiment has been made upon you, and the last arrow has been shot at you, and the last call of tenderness you may ever hear has reached your senses, while your heart has remained as shielded and impenetrable as before; and the kind Saviour, who is still as merciful a High Priest as ever—seeing the determined obstinacy, and self-deceit, and incurable delusion of your souls, may be saying of you what He said of Jerusalem, "O ye people, ye people, I would have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not; O had you minded the things which belonged to your peace, but now they are forever hid from your eyes."

Let me hope better things of you, my brethren. Let me hope that all this tenderness is not lost upon you. Let me trust that in many a soul of many a hearer there is a movement towards God. I see not the heart of any of you; but if a single sigh after repentance is now lifting from any one of them, if a single purpose of repentance is now forming—though I see it not, God sees it; and with all the eagerness of a father after one of his lost and alienated children, will He descend from the eminence of His glory, and run to meet you, though you be far off from Him, and stretch out the hand of encouragement to receive you, and welcome you with a thousand greetings to the household of the faithful, and perfect that which concerns you, and minister abundant pardon through the blood of Him who has magnified His law and made it honourable, and sustain you by the constant supplies of His grace, and by the daily refreshment of that Spirit who can alone strengthen you for all obedience. Do, my brethren, stir yourselves to the mighty work of repentance. It is comparatively but a poor argument to allege that by so doing you will send joy into the heart of your minister, or of any fellow-mortal—you will rejoice the hearts of angels who are now standing on the high eminences of heaven, and casting their benevolent eyes on you, and would smile complacency on the prospect of another penitent to join their happy number; and there is not one of you, though worthless as the worst of sinners, and poor as beggary itself, who may not, this very day, by the softening of his heart into the repentance of the gospel, spread joy over the wide circle of heaven's benignant family.

And having asked you to begin the good course, let me conclude with the positive requirement which our Saviour laid upon the people He called, even at the very outset of their discipleship. In coming to Christ, forsake all. You cannot too early begin the work of struggling with your iniquities. Nay, if you are not so struggling, the invitations of the gospel have had no effect upon you. He who turneth to Christ, turneth from his iniquities. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners—give up all that your conscience tells you to be wrong—seek after all that your conscience tells you to be right—enter from this moment into a course of decided turning from all wickedness, and of decided earnestness in all the new obedience of the gospel. God will not despise the day of small things. He will not turn in indifference away from your first attempts to seek after Him, if haply you may find Him. Cherish no doubt of your forgiveness through the merits of His Son—if you betake yourselves to the leaving off of all that He bids you leave off, and to the doing of all that He bids you do; and could we only get the matter begun, with such a principle and such a purpose at the bottom of it, I would not be afraid of your stopping short: but, committing yourselves to the guidance of

Him who is able to strengthen you for the doing of all things, you would abound more and more every day, and experience all those changes of soul and of spirit, as well as of body, which make you meet for the Jerusalem above.

SERMON XXIII.

*The Christian Ministry Secularized.**

" Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables."—Acts vi. 2.

It is a very possible thing to denounce a vicious system without bearing hard on so much as one of the individual agents of that system. It is a very possible thing to attack a great public corruption—ay, and that, too, with all the honest vehemence of sentiment, while all that vehemence of passion which discharges itself in the severities of pointed and personal application, may be utterly kept away. Surely it is quite possible to be on the one hand zealously affected in a good thing, and on the other hand to bear in constant and effectual remembrance that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. May we therefore never let down our zeal for the good work of a most desirable and much called for reformation, and at the same time never suffer the entrance into our bosoms for an ingredient so hateful as contempt towards any one established dignity, or the virulence of exasperated feeling towards the perversities or the wilful blindness of any one individual.

I hold it fair to say, in relation to the case now before us, that were I at all disposed to wreak anger or give vent to any one of my vindictive sensibilities on this subject, I should be at a loss to find out the human being on whom I could make to rest the burden of my indignation. I positively cannot tell who have the blame of this mischievous system. Not altogether the existing generation of official men—for they received it as a legacy from their predecessors. Not altogether the senators of our land, who are so heedlessly accumulating upon the ministers of religion such an oppressive load of signatures and certificates, and other underling secularities, as, if persisted in much longer, will bury the sacredness of the character altogether, and transform him who sustains it into a mere agent of police or of civil regulation—for the unseen field of our labours is too far removed from their habitual observation to make them at all aware of the mischief they are inflicting on the character of our people, and the best interests of our country. Not altogether the ministers themselves, whose task it is to watch over their assigned department, and in the duteous spirit of loyalty, to tell our state, our governors, and our patriots, how hurtfully this invasion bears on the usefulness of their order; for in truth the progress of the mischief has been most insinuating—it has come upon us in the way of gradual accumulations. At each distinct step it wore the aspect of a benevolent and kind accommodation to the humbler orders of society—and so the matter has swelled and multiplied till the upshot of this kind and benevolent system has been that in our larger towns it has effected, as to every moral and every

* After his settlement in Glasgow, Dr. Chalmers was excessively annoyed by the accumulation of all kinds of secular business which was laid upon the city ministers. Resolved to proclaim as widely as possible the wrongs thus done to the Christian ministry, and at least to work out a way of deliverance for himself, he carried the subject to the pulpit. He had intended to preach twice upon this topic. The effect of the first sermon—the one now published—was such that he was dissuaded from pursuing it—abundant assurances being tendered to him that he would not be so interfered with in the future. So strongly, however, had he felt upon this matter, that I find among his manuscripts, the introduction to a sermon intended to be a sequel to the one now published, written about the time that he was appointed to the Church of St. John's, and which he had purposed to deliver to the Tron Church congregation before parting from them. Owing, I presume, to an urgency similar to that which had been brought to bear upon him previously, his intention in this second instance also was laid aside.

spiritual purpose, an entire separation of the minister and the people from each other; and the man whose business it was in the olden time to prepare for your Sabbath instruction, and to watch over your souls, and to hold individual conference with every earnest inquirer, and to ply his daily attendance upon your death-beds, and by his yearly presence to shed a holy influence over your streets and your families, and to brandish all that spiritual armour which the great Master of the Church has put into his hand for reclaiming the profligate and overawing the audaciously wicked, and arresting the mad career of licentiousness, and so manifesting the truth to the consciences of men as to force their willing consent to the faith and the obedience of the gospel—the man, I say, who had this for his business then, has got other business now to engross and to occupy him. The kind and the benevolent system has put other services into his hand, and he is far too busy with the performance of these modern and superinduced duties, which have been grafted on our clerical office, to have either time or strength for the drivelling exercises of a former generation—and so it is, my brethren, that now-a-days among the other boasts of this enlightened age, you will find he can boast a chamber which has upon it as much of the important aspect of business as any of you, and he is as deeply involved in the whirl of secular employments, and is as constantly beset with the urgency of most clamorous demands on his time and his attention; and that inner apartment which was wont to be the scene of meditations sustained for hours together, and out of which the well-built argument, and the powerful remonstrance, and the pathetic expostulation, issued forth in a refreshing stream of Christian and moral influence upon the people, is now laid open to the din of every invading footstep, and has all its thoughtfulness and all its tranquillity chased away from it, and the whole of that machinery by which the products of the mind are accumulated through the week, and brought forth with the return of every hallowed day to nourish and to edify a congregation, is now most cruelly broken up. Ay, my brethren, and if you have any sympathy at all with the woes of that dark period in history when the unlettered hordes of the North burst on the polished domains of art and of learning, and in one tide of ruthless invasion laid low all the vestiges of refinement, and bore down all the aspiring energies of genius, then let me point your attention to another invasion just as Gothic in its character, though not so widely visible in its display—an invasion by which the door of many an intellectual retreat is now no longer a security to its occupier, and the truly British maxim of every man's house being his castle is trampled upon in all the wantonness of an arbitrary and assumed discretion by the constituted authorities of the land. Yes! and be they the rulers of our kingdom or the rulers of our cities who give their seal to these distressing inroads on the peacefulness of a studious habitation, all the power which sanctions so glaring an injustice, and all that pageantry of official grandeur by which the solemn air of legality is thrown around it, only serve to confirm the resemblance which has now occurred to me; nor, should this shameful claim be persisted in, shall I ever cease to look upon it as the triumph of strength over principle, the mournful ascendency of vulgar power over the high prerogatives of the understanding.

In the prosecution of the following discourse, I shall first submit to your attention a short narrative of all the exactions and the services by which the ministers of the gospel in this our land are withdrawn from prayer and from the ministry of the word. I shall, in the second place, attempt to demonstrate the evils of this system; and, in the third place, to recommend some palliatives by which, till it be conclusively done away, a defence against these evils might be reared in behalf of our parish and our congregation.

I proceed, in the first place, to the narrative.

Among the people of our busy land, who are ever on the wing of activity, and whether in circumstances of peace or of war, are at all times feeling the impulse of some national movement or other, it is not to be wondered at that a

series of transactions should be constantly flowing between the metropolis of the empire and its distant provinces. There are the remittances which pass through our public offices from soldiers and sailors in the service of Government to their relations at home. There are letters of inquiry sent back again from their relations. There is all the correspondence, and all the business of draughts, and other negotiations which come upon the decease of a soldier or a sailor. There is the whole tribe of hospital allowances. There is the payment of pensions, and a variety of other items, of which I am sorry that I have kept no register, but which even though I had, it might have been improper to suspend your attention any longer upon so strange and tedious an enumeration.

Now, here lies the essence of the mischief. The individuals with whom these different transactions are carried on need to be verified. They live in some parish or other—and who can be fitter for the required purpose than the parish minister? He is, or he ought to be, acquainted with every one of his parishioners; and this acquaintance, which he never can obtain in towns but by years of ministerial exertion amongst them, is turned to an object destructive of the very principle upon which he was selected for such a service. It saddles him with a task which breaks in upon his ministerial exertions—which widens his distance from his people, and in the end makes him as unfit for certifying a single clause of information about them as the most private individual of his neighbourhood.

Yet so it is. The minister is the organ of many a communication between his people and the offices in London—and many a weary signature is exacted from him, and a world of management is devolved upon his shoulders; and instead of sitting like his fathers in office, surrounded by the theology of present or of other days, he must now turn his study into a counting-room, and have his well-arranged cabinet before him, fitted up with its sections and its other conveniences for notices and duplicates, and all the scraps and memoranda of a manifold correspondence.

But the history does not stop here. The example of Government has descended, and is now quickly running through the whole field of private and individual agency. The negotiation of the business of prize moneys is one out of several examples which occur to me. The emigration of new settlers to Canada is another. It does not appear that there is any act of Government authorizing the agents in this matter to fix on the clergy as the organs, either for the transaction of their business, or the conveyance of their information to the people of the land. But they find it convenient to follow the example of Government, and have accordingly done so—and in this way a mighty host of schedules and circulars and printed forms, with long blank spaces which the minister will have the goodness to fill up according to the best of his knowledge, come into mustering competition with the whole of his other claims and his other engagements. It is true that the minister in this case may decline to have the goodness; but then the people are apprized of the arrangement, and trained as they have been too well to look up to the minister as an organ of civil accommodation, will they lay siege to his dwelling-house, and pour upon him with their inquiries, and the cruel alternative is laid upon him either to obstruct the convenience of his parishioners, and scowl them away from his presence, or to take the whole weight of a management that has been so indiscreetly and so wantonly assigned to him. In the painful struggle between the kindliness of his nature and the primitive and essential duties of his office, he may happen to fix on the worse and not on the better part. It was not reason that even for such a service I should leave the ministry of the word and prayer—but in an unlucky moment I have done so, along, I believe, with the vast majority of my brethren; and out of the multitude of other doings from this source of employment alone, which are now past and have sunk into oblivion, the simple achievement of seventy signatures in one day is all that my dizzy recollection has been able to keep and to perpetuate.

If for the expediting of business we are to be made free with even by pro-

vate individuals, it is not to be wondered at if charitable bodies should at all times look for our subserviency to their schemes and their operations of benevolence. When a patriotic fund, or a Waterloo subscription, blazes in all the splendour of a nation's munificence and a nation's gratitude before the public eye, who shall have the hardihood to refuse a single item of the bidden co-operation that is expected from him? Surely such a demand as this is quite irresistible, and accordingly from this quarter too heavy a load of consultations and certificates, with the additional singularity of having to do with the drawing of money, and the keeping of it in safe custody, and the dealing out of it in small discretionary parcels, according to the needs and circumstances of the parties—all, all is placed upon the shoulders of the already jaded and overborne minister.

But the greater number of these employments, it may be thought, originated in our state of war—and now that war is at an end, they will cease with the final winding-up of the old system. Oh, no! my brethren. This great event which has brought peace to the whole country, has brought no peace to the minister. In some unlucky hour or other the Secretary-at-War seems to have had a conversation with the Secretary for the Home Department, and to have supplied him with the mischievous hint of how vastly convenient a set of people were we ministers. I do not know if this be the exact account of the matter; but thus much I know, that some such hint has been given, and that the hint is most assuredly acted upon—for the practice has now fairly got in, when the right man cannot be found for doing any piece of provincial business, just to hinge it all upon the minister. Ay, my brethren, and should you hear of your minister sitting in judgment on the qualifications of hawkers and spirit-dealers, and of certifying accordingly, you must just put it down among the first-fruits of that precious system which has lately been devised, and is now in a state of hopeful perseverance, for conducting the matters of our home administration.

I know not where this is to end, or what new and unheard of duties are still in reserve for us; but thus much I know, that they are in the way of an indefinite accumulation. I have heard obscurely of some very recent addition to our burdens, but of what it particularly is I have not got the distinct or the authentic information. I am not civilian enough to know if even an Act of Parliament carry such an omnipotence along with it as to empower this strange series of wanton and arbitrary infringements on the individual hours and liberties of clergymen; but I am patriot enough to feel that the rulers of our country are, for a trifling accommodation which they should contrive to find somewhere else, bartering away the best interests of its people—that through the side of its public instructors they are reaching a blow to the morality and principle of the commonwealth—that by every such impolitic enactment as I have now attempted to expose, they are slackening the circulation of Christianity and all of its healthful and elevating influences amongst our towns and our families—that they are sweeping away from the face of every larger city the best securities for order and contentment and loyalty; nor should I wonder if, in some future period of turbulence and disorder, they shall rue the infatuation which led them so to tamper with the religion of our land by the inroads they are now making on the duties, and the cruel profanation they are now inflicting on the sacredness of its officiating ministers.

I now pass from the imposition laid on the clergy by government to another set of impositions still more grievous and intolerable—impositions, in virtue of which the city of our habitation would strip its ministers of all the comfort and all the privileges of a home—impositions by which you would turn what ought to be a life of tranquillity into a life of tumult and distraction—impositions by which you would commit to your Christian teachers the burden of services which others should have borne, and would offer to degrade them into a truckling subserviency upon your accommodation, and would do what the sons of liberal and gener-

ous accomplishment lift up their hand in astonishment at being told of—would force an unhallowed entrance into the retreats of contemplation, and beset the study of a clergyman with a tribe of invasions so boisterous and unseemly that you would refuse an admittance for them into your own counting-houses. I will not detach a single feature from this representation—nor shall I ever cease to assert for the labours of the mind that respect and that pre-eminence which have been hitherto withheld from them. I know it well that upon this subject there is a very heavy and a very general obtuseness, that the processes of thought are not understood by those with whom we have to deal, that they do not readily perceive the extent of that mischief which might be wrought by a single interruption—how one painful collision with some clamorous and dissatisfied petitioner is enough to turn the inner-chamber of the mind into a chaos of disorder, and to unstring for a day the whole of its delicate machinery. All this, if poured into the ear of a literary man, or addressed to a reading and a cultivated public, would meet at once their discernment; and in their intelligent sympathy some recompense would be gotten for the suffering complained of. But O, how cold and how comfortless it feels when, in the work of vindicating the prerogative of intellectual labour, one cannot but perceive that he is lifting up his voice in a wilderness—that the whole stream of his utterance on the subject plays upon the hearer like the gibberish of an unknown tongue—that an aspect of dull and unmeaning wonderment is all the effect which your demonstrations can produce upon them—that no access can be opened up for your argument to understandings which look as if they were overborne by the leaden influences of a Bœotian atmosphere—and how freezing the mortification is, none but he who has experienced it can tell, when, on pleading this fine and eloquent cause with one on whom wealth has conferred its elevation, or over whom office has spread its sparkling investiture, it is found that all is deafened and absorbed by a mind steeped in sordidness, or trenched in all the habits and in all the conceptions of an invincible plebeianism.

But let me take up this part of my narrative. The benevolent citizens of a former age have thrown an illustration over this our town by the charities they have bequeathed to it, and they have devolved upon the clergy much of the management and much of the patronage of these charities. Now, before I proceed a single inch farther in my statement, I must here remind you that the question at present is not as to the benefit or the wisdom of any one of our institutions—it is as to the people on whom should be placed the burden of their manifold and ever-recurring agency. The institutions are there, and no breath, either of contempt or of obloquy, from me, shall ever tarnish the memory of their founders. I join issue with the warmest and most enthusiastic admirer of these philanthropic endowments, in the principle that the business of every one of them must be done—ay, and ought to be done most duly, most vigilantly, most conscientiously. The only alternative betwixt us—and I call your distinct attention to it—is from what quarter of society are the doers to be furnished? Whether it is the time of a clergyman, or the time of a private citizen, that is to be put into requisition for this object? Is the encroachment to be made on the public services of the one, or on the business and relaxation, and family enjoyments, of the other? The work must be done; and the question that now lies in the ante-chamber of your mind, and for which I am knocking at the door, and soliciting you to step forward and favour me with a deliverance, is, shall it be done at the expense of a great public interest, which is enough, and more than enough, to occupy all the labourers who are attached to it? or shall it be done, at the expense of a little ease and a little conveniency, by another set of labourers?

This is the state of the competition. These are the real terms of the controversy, of which I shall keep a firm hold, and to which, at every step in the progress of the argument, I shall never cease to recall you. I am aware of the clamoring that has been raised upon

this subject, and of the false glare that has been thrown around it to bewilder the public understanding, and how the minister who proposes to retire from the business of a charity is maligned as an enemy to the charity itself, and—as if he had no other field of usefulness to cultivate, and no other walk of duty to move in, and no other public service, the claims of which laid it most imperiously upon him to husband all the time and all the strength that he was master of—his individual withdrawment from some one subordinate employment, which hundreds could manage and could execute, is counted upon as a dead loss to the good and the interest of society. Now, all I aim at by this, my brethren, is to summon your minds to the exercise of a just calculation, to look how the real state of the alternative lies, to show you that the charity itself is kept in all the entireness of its unbroken claim on the protection of the community—that the question is not as to the expediency of the endowment at all, but it is whether for its required agency men are to be secluded from a prior field of benevolent occupation, or men are to be taken, for the time that might well be spared from business and recreation, out of the ranks of ordinary citizenship? Whether the public, for the presence of the clergy in your halls, and their exertions in your committees of management, is to lose a portion of those peculiar services which, from the days of apostolical institution, they are destined to perform? or whether the public, by the substituted exertions of others, is, without the necessity of so cruel and so injurious a sacrifice of its best interests, to reap a clear addition to the tribute which it draws from the spirit and the patriotism of its members?—in one word, the question is, whether one good thing shall be done for society at the expense of another good thing, or both shall be rendered to it in the shape of two distinct and unmutilated offerings? When I tell you, my brethren, that I am for both, and that the whole drift of my argument is on the side of two offerings instead of one, you will learn how to appreciate that misconstruction by which the retirement of clergymen from the secularities of public benevolence is interpreted into a measure of hostility against the public weal, in any of its departments; and should you, my friends, ever hear this good evil-spoken of, you, I trust, will not be put out of the plainest maxims of calculation by such an outcry as this, with all the currency that has been impressed upon it, and all the reinforcement it has gotten from the ceaseless quavers, both of male and of female sentimentalism.

I trust, therefore, that nothing more is necessary for making good this part of my argument, than a simple computation of the time by which the service of these various institutions is made to encroach on the other duties and exercises of clergymen. To this point I cannot speak from personal experience; for feeling as I have all along done, that the requisitions in question were more honoured in the breach than the observance, I have declined a compliance with them; but I am only speaking, you will observe, of the requisitions of bodily attendance. I am only speaking of that branch of the duties, the performance of which calls for the transference of his person from one place to another, and from the drudgery of which a man can defend himself by the simple act, or rather by the no act, of sitting still. I am speaking of these constant draughts upon his bodily presence, which if he made it a point of conscience to answer, he behooved week after week, and day after day, to be in a state of endless locomotion. As it has been my habit to dishonour these draughts, I cannot furnish you with any estimate of the labour they exact, from my actual performance of it; but if I may judge from the exceeding number of printed circulars which come in by hourly arrival, and keep up upon me at all times a close and a well-supported assault of intimations, I am sure though without the experience of any actual doings in this way—I am perfectly sure that were I to obey the every call of these winged messengers, and to ply my weary round among all the committees which they announce to me, and to take my every turn of the bidden attendance, and to give my mind to every subject of every deliberation we are expected to share in, and to bow my

neck to the burden of all the directorships and secretaryships, and president and vice-presidentships which are habitually laid upon us—then, my brethren, might I retire from the ministry of the word and prayer altogether, and give not a single half-hour in the twelvemonth to the work of Sabbath preparation, and bid a stern refusal to the every imploring call of the sick and the desolate and the dying, and bid a final adieu to the whole business of family and household ministrations—and, after all, on the strength just of the performances that I have now specified, just of the duties and of no other that I have now touched upon, just of all that bustle and variety and exercise, both active and contemplative, for which the hospitals and other charities of the place throw open a most ample field to those who choose to embark upon it their time and their energies—I might in this way, I assert, sink all that originally belonged to the office of a minister of the gospel, and yet earn the character among you of being a most laborious, hard-wrought, painstaking, and in a great variety of ways most serviceable minister.

Now suffer me, my brethren, at this point in my narrative, most respectfully to charge you with a certain taste and tendency of your affections, which to me is a phenomenon of human character that is inexplicable. What I mean is the strong and insatiable relish which many of you feel, whether upon the occasions of public business, or of social intercourse, for the personal exhibition of your clergyman. Now, to minister gratification to this said relish, it is not necessary that he should help forward the business a single inch by his counsel or his experience. The whole management could go on throughout all its stages as well without him; and on what principle it is that his mere bodily presence should add a single whit either to the beauty or the completeness of the operation, is altogether beyond any talent of comprehension that I am possessed of. But whether I understand it or not, the peculiarity to which I am adverting, has, you must permit me to say, an undoubted existence among you; and to humour it, all that is necessary is just for the minister to lend out his person to the demands which are thus made on it—and though silent all the while as a statue, a mighty, and what appears to me as a mysterious object, appears to be fulfilled just by his being there; and when to satisfy my unequaled curiosity as to the cause, I have ventured to put a question upon the subject, I never yet got any further within the limits of an adequate answer, than merely—that they liked to see him; and thus, with no other purpose than that of solacing an appetite, for which I am sorry I can get no better designation than a doating and superstitious fondness, the most deep and serious invasions are practised every day on the great province of the Christian ministry. And every spiritual workman in our establishment is surrounded by requisitions with which, if he were to comply to the amount of a very small fraction indeed, he would be kept in a state of perpetual belaborment; and it is not so much this unwarrantable craving after the man's bodily appearance that I complain of, for I most cheerfully admit, that there may be much of the milk of human kindness in it; and if the cordialities of human feeling have any play at all within his bosom, it is quite impossible to look at such an ingredient as this with an aspect of severity.

But the thing, my dear brethren, which grieves me is, that there should be among you such a low estimate of the value of ministerial time, and of the substantial importance of strictly ministerial exercises—that because you do not see him at his professional work, the work should be counted so light and easy that it may be wantonly and at all times broken in upon—that because he is not compassed about with the insignia of visible employment, he may therefore be presumed to have little or no employment at all; and all this has helped, it has most powerfully and materially helped, to turn the stream of the demand for public agency away from the haunts of ordinary merchandise, and to bring it in an overwhelming tide of inundation on the houses of your clergymen—and it has well-nigh swept before it all that is primitive and peculiar in the du-

ties of clergymen. It has helped—it has most mischievously helped, to efface the sacredness of our office, and to transform him who fills it into a man of mere secularities. It has helped—it has most woefully helped, to put the religious character of our situation into the background of public contemplation altogether, and to substitute in its place the labour of such services as others should have rendered—the weight of such manifold and oppressive drudgeries as others should have borne.

But to go on with my narrative. I have already said much of the interruption and the labour which the public charities of the place bring along with them; and yet I have not told you one half the amount of it. I have only insisted on that part of it which takes a minister from his house, and from which the minister, at the expense of a little odium, can at all times protect himself, by the determined habit of sitting immovable under every call and every application. All that arrangement which takes a minister away from his house may be evaded—but how shall he be able to extricate himself from the besetting inconveniences of such an arrangement as gives to the whole population of a neighbourhood a constant and ever-moving tendency toward the house of the minister? The patronage with which I think it is his heavy misfortune to be encumbered, gives him a share in the disposal of innumerable vacancies, and each vacancy gives rise to innumerable candidates, and each candidate is sure to strengthen his chance of success by stirring up a whole round of acquaintances, who, in the various forms of written and of personal entreaty, discharge their wishes on the minister in the shape of innumerable applications. It is fair to observe, however, that the turmoil of all this electioneering has its times and its seasons. It does not keep by one in the form of a steady monsoon. It comes upon him more in the resemblance of a hurricane; and like the hurricanes of the atmosphere, it has its months of violence and its intervals of periodical cessation. I shall only say, that when it does come, the power of contemplation takes to herself wings and flees away. She cannot live and flourish in the whirlwind of all that noise and confusion by which her retreat is so boisterously agitated. She sickens and grows pale at every quivering of the household bell, and at every volley from the household door, by which the loud notes of impatience march along all the passages, and force an impetuous announcement into every chamber of the dwelling-place. She finds all this to be too much for her. These rude and incessant visitations fatigue and exhaust her, and at length banish her entirely; nor will she suffer either force or flattery to detain her in a mansion invaded by the din of such turbulent and uncongenial elements.

But though I talk of cessations and intervals, you are not to suppose that there are ever at any time the intervals of absolute repose. There is a daily visitation, though it is only at particular months that it comes upon you with all the vehemence and force of a tornado. There was of late an unceasing stream of people passing every day through the house, and coming under the review of the minister on their road to the supplies of ordinary pauperism. This formed part of the prescribed conveyance through which each of them trust to find their way to the relief that they aspired after. This always secured a levee of petitioners, and kept up a perennial flow of applications, varying in rapidity and fulness with the difficulty of the times—but never, in the whole course of my experience, subsiding into a rill so gentle that it only ministered delight and refreshment to the bosom by the peacefulness of its murmurs. Oh, no! my brethren—there is a something here about which our tearful sons and daughters of poesy are most miserably in the wrong. I know that they have got many fine things to say about the minister of a beneficent religion having a ready tear for every suffering, and an open ear for every cry, and room in his house for every complainer, and room in his heart for a distinct exercise of compassion on the needs and the distresses of every afflicted family, and an open door through which the representations of dejected humanity may ever find a welcome admittance, and a free unoccupied day throughout every hour of which it is his part to

act the willing friend of his parishioners, and to yield the alacrity of his immediate attentions in behalf of all the wants and all the wretchedness that is among them. Yes! all this ought to be done, and agents should be found for the doing of it. But the minister is not the man who can do it. The minister is not the man who should do it. And beset as we are on the one hand by a hard and a secular generation, who, without one sigh of remorse, could see every minister of the city sinking the spiritualities of his office under the weight of engagements which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers: and deafened as we are on the other hand by the outcry of puling sentimentalists, who without thought and without calculation would realize all the folly and all the fondness of their fancy sketches upon us, I utterly refuse the propriety of all these services —and yet proclaiming myself the firm, the ardent, the devoted friend of the poor, do I assert these advocates of theirs to be the blind supporters of a system which has aggravated both the moral and the physical wretchedness of a most cruelly neglected population.

But I must bring my narrative to a close. There are many other miscellaneous items of employment which I have neither time nor recollection for enumerating. Many of the admittances into the charity schools of the place are granted upon the recommendation of a minister. Many statements about the circumstances of people, as if he were at all a fit hand for an office so invidious and so indelicate, will only be received on the attestation of a minister. The petitions for exemption from taxes must be signed by a minister. The petitions for exemption from road-money must be signed by a minister. The former of these two last is an imposition laid on us by Government—the latter is a county or a municipal imposition. But, indeed it is not of much consequence to advert to this distinction. Our state and our provincial and our city rulers are all equally defaulters in this respect —that they have all a most invincible appetite for the aid and information of the minister—that from every quarter, whether of civil or of political regulation, there is a constant tendency to draw upon the time and the services of the minister—that this is fast ripening into all the stability of a familiar and a customary practice—that every year is separating the clergy of our Established Church by a wider interval from all the proper and peculiar duties of their employment—and that up from the high court of Parliament down to the humblest corporations of the land, there is a general and alarming process now in full operation to transform and to secularize, and I add, most woefully to degrade us.

I will not speak at length just now about the mischievous effect of all this on the great mass of our population. We hold out in their eyes a totally different aspect from the ministers of a former age. We are getting every year more assimilated in look and in complexion to your surveyors, and your city clerks, and your justices, and your distributors of stamps, and all those men of place who have to do with the people in the matters of civil or of municipal agency. Every feature in the sacredness of our character is wearing down amid all the stir and hurry and hard-driving of this manifold officiality. And thus it is that our parishioners have lost sight of us altogether as their spiritual directors, and seldom or never come to us upon any spiritual errand at all—but taking us as they are led to do by the vicious system that is now in progressive operation—taking us as they are led by that system to find us, they are ever and anon overwhelming us with consultations about their temporalities—and the whole flavour of the spiritual relation between a pastor and his flock is dissipated and done away. There is none of the unction of Christianity at all in the intercourse we hold with them; and everything that relates to the soul and to the interests of eternity, and to the religious cure of themselves and of their families, is elbowed away by the work of filling up their schedules, and advising them about their moneys, and shuffling along with them amongst the forms and the papers of a most intricate correspondence. Time, and the concerns and the managements of time, have left no room for other conversation;

and our poor perishing and misled people almost never think of bending their footsteps towards us on any other object than that of mere business. But upon this object they do crowd around us at a rate that is incalculable; and after having enumerated the specific purposes, for which in compliance with our Government and city regulations they are led to transact with their minister, you are now prepared to understand how the general effect of the whole system is to make them look up to their minister as a man of great wisdom and information about all the secularities they have to do with, and that he is competent to furnish them with the best advice under every imaginable difficulty—and that surely they cannot trust so firmly to any quarter as to the ready friendship and the well-exercised discernment of their minister. And thus it is that the habit is now formed of repairing to him with the strangest variety of topics, on which he is expected to deliberate and to counsel them; and this ultimate effect of the system I have now been attempting to expose, forms a heavy addition to all those distractions which harrow up the mind, to all those annoyances which surround the person, to all those merciless intrusions which profane the every retirement, and reduce to a thing of shreds and patches the every intellectual process of your ministers.

SERMON XXIV.

*Christian Meekness.**

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans do the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—MATTHEW v. 38—48.

THERE is something in all these precepts that is apt to startle and to perplex us. The selfishness of man, which naturally is by far the most sensitive part of his constitution, takes immediate alarm at them, and would recoil from a morality in the observance of which it conceives that all the securities of justice be hoovedto be broken up, and that the interest of every scrupulous Christian would be thrown open and defenceless against the inroad of a thousand possibilities. If I am fanatic enough to give to every one who chooseth to ask of me, I shall soon become as helpless and as indigent as any of them. If in this age of splendid enterprises I accede to the demand of every borrower, when—fully bent on the airy magnificence of their own speculations—so many are to be found who without one sigh of remorse will put the property of others in the most hazardous exposures—why, at this rate I shall soon exchange that tranquillity which arises from the consciousness of all that belongs to me being in safe keeping, for a state of fearful brooding, anxious insecurity. If I resist not the unfair encroachments of a neighbour, but rather than go to law make a surrender to him of the full, and more than the full, of his iniquitous demand, I shall soon become a prey to the rapacity and the fraudulence of all who are around me. If I make no head against

* Preached at Glasgow, in September, 1816.

the urgency of others plying their own selfish exactions on my time and my conveniency, I shall soon meet with a number of people who will triumph over the facility of my compliances, and would reduce me to a state of humble and truckling subserviency on all the wanton variety of their inclinations. If I resent not the indignity of a blow, I shall throw myself open to every degradation of insult and of violence. And lastly, if I shall accomplish so romantic and so seemingly impracticable a thing as to love my enemies, I invite their hostility—I set up in my own person a mark for all the attempts of malignity and injustice—I bid the worst and the basest of men trample with impunity upon me. Nor do I conceive how, were I to pitch my aim from this moment at a morality so remote from all that the eye-witnesses of human life and human performance, I could be upheld for a single month in any of the comforts or any of the securities of my earthly existence.

In this way do you not perceive how the mind of him who summons up all these anticipations, and dwells upon them with such feelings of disquietude and alarm, may in fact be thrown into an open and determined revolt against the authority of these requirements altogether? Do you not conceive how his anger and his urgent sense of interest, and his impatience under the provocation of injustice, and his dread lest the forbearance laid upon him in this passage should invite the repetition of it—do you not conceive how all this might raise up the feelings and resentments and purposes of the inner man to an actual warfare against the Lawgiver of the New Testament? Oh! my brethren, are there none here present who with the lustre of many graceful accomplishments upon them, utterly refuse all homage to the pacific and the yielding virtues which are here recommended? We do not question their integrity—we grant it of them that they have passed through the manifold transactions of business without the flaw of a single impeachment upon their reputation—we know how proudly they would disdain the temptation which offered to draw them aside from the onward line of truth and of rectitude. But with all this stirring sense of honour which they carry in their bosoms, are there none who carry the stirrings of a proud and vindictive jealousy along with it? We allow that in the heart of many an acquaintance there is a high-minded principle, in virtue of which he moves through society without the taint upon his character of any one suspicious imputation. But surely, if it be through the working of the same high-minded principle that he disdains an affront, and has no sufferance for an injury, and gives impetuous way to all the movements of a quick and restive indignation, do you not see how possible it is that a quality or a temper of the soul may both bear the name and receive the homage of a virtue in the exercise of which God is dethroned from the sovereignty which belongs to Him; and have we not here an example of that thing which is highly esteemed among men being in God's sight an abomination?

But the heart of man must find some other plea to satisfy it than its own wilfulness, and amid all his resentful feelings and all his selfish alarms he is ever seeking to put on the semblance of principle—and in the very case that we are now putting does he affect an apprehension for the interests of virtue—and he will link his own cause with the cause of society at large—and he will tell us that the unreserved habit of giving which the Gospel recommends would unhinge the whole system and order of the community; that were Christians to bring these various precepts to a literal and unreserved fulfilment, all industry would be suspended, and all justice be trampled under foot, and an unprincipled violence would walk at large over the face of the country; and that under this extravagant doctrine of non-resistance all the mounds of public and personal security would be swept away, and that the painful spectacle would ever be offering itself of sordid and unrelenting men carrying it with a triumphant impunity over the weak but conscientious disciples of a religion which taught them to bend sub-

missively to every imposition, and to yield an unquestioning compliance with every requirement.

In this way you can conceive how selfishness may borrow to herself something like the colour of virtue—and in her active resistance to the virtues of the text, she may have something at least like the semblance of public consideration to rest upon, and to save the appearance of consistency with this express passage of revelation, she will turn that branch of Christian morality of which it treats into a question of degrees—and sitting in judgment on this question, she will ask in how far we are to understand that a literal obedience should be yielded, or at what precise point in the scale of hardship and privation it is right for a disciple of the New Testament to make his stand? And is there no hazard, think you, in these circumstances, that a man will carry his patience and his meekness and his long-suffering just as far, and no farther, than suits the wilfulness of his own inclination, and that full license will be given to the spontaneous movements of anger and jealousy—and that by the weight of this combined sophistry, into which the will and the reason have thrown their respective elements, the bidden duties of the text will be completely overborne—and that thus, after all, the counsel of the man's own heart and the sight of his own eyes, will carry it over the will of God, so as that the authority of these His precepts shall be set aside altogether, and we His subjects occupied with the exceptions that we have mustered up against the rule which He has delivered to us, shall lose sight of the rule itself as the matter of our most strenuous and diligent and pointed observations.

Now, I count it a high point of Christian discipleship that when we sit down to the book of God's revelation, we should do it with the sense upon our hearts that we are in a state of entire pupilage—that every commandment which issues from this book should carry the influence of its own direct and obvious authority along with it—that for us to summon up in opposition to these commandments either the alarms of selfishness, or any general speculations of ours about the machinery of public and political interest, is to eye this book with the authority of judges, rather than to drink in its lessons with the spirit and the acquiescence of little children—that at this rate, every obligation of the New Testament morality may be paralyzed, and every requirement be dethroned from the sovereignty which belongs to it, and we, instead of acting our bidden part in that great system which it is for God alone to survey in all the variety of its bearings, and to adjust throughout all the intricacy of its movements, may be offering to thwart the divine will by some paltry interest of our own, or by some no less paltry but presumptuous theory to embarrass these beneficent plans of administration which the divine wisdom has conceived, and which the divine power will carry into sure effect by the instrumentality, not of man's skilful corrections, but of man's humble and unresisting obedience.

The wisdom of man may throw a mistiness around the declarations of the will and the counsel of God; but surely if all the attempts of human wisdom to restrain or to qualify be warded away from the passage now before us, there cannot be devised a statement of meaning more perspicuous or more fitted to find a direct and lucid conveyance into the plainest understanding. Just conceive a man resolved to bind himself hand and foot to the authority of God, and that he shall neither flinch from any one bidding, however it may cross and gall his inclination, nor suffer himself to be bewildered away by any sophistry whatever from the obvious signification of the verses which have now been submitted to you—and is it possible for him to miss the sense of precepts so clearly and prosaically laid down, as —Resist not evil, and Give to him that asketh thee, and Love thine enemies, and Do good to them that hate you, and Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you?

The principle of being resolved at all hazards to follow the will of God, is the main and the essential element of sanctification. A man possessed of this principle will fearlessly embark himself on the line of entire and universal obedience. He will look upon this as his

alone business, and will prosecute no by-end whatever that can at all distract him from this only path to a blissful eternity. I know that at the outset of this path his brooding fancy may aggravate the many hardships he will have to encounter—ay, and if he has not wound up his resolves to that great and initiatory principle in the life of a Christian, of forsaking all, and being willing to surrender all at the requirements of the one Master he has chosen, he will either shrink from Christianity altogether, or take up with a diluted and a compromised Christianity, in the service of which he will never earn the reward of him who cleaves with full purpose of heart unto his God. Be assured, my brethren, that there is a corroding worm throughout the whole system of your religious concerns, if there be not a singleness of aim and a singleness of desire, and an unbroken principle on your part implicitly to follow wherever the word of God shall lead the way; and if you offer to except or to modify any obvious precept of His, whether it be on the impulse of an alarmed selfishness, or on some presumptuous speculation of your own about the general interest of a world which it is for Him alone to manage and superintend—you just make a rebellious deviation from the course that He has prescribed to you, and you insert such a flaw into your own personal Christianity as violates the simplicity, and must eventually mar the success of the whole enterprise.

But if the alarm be extravagant, and beyond the truth of the case, would it not be well to reduce and to quiet it? Surely, in the work of counting the cost of the tower before you sit down to build it, if it be wrong to make a flattering estimate, it is also wrong to make an exaggerated one of the whole expense and difficulty of the undertaking. It is true that whatever the expense be, you should have an honest and entire readiness both to do and to suffer all things which you think, upon your clear understanding of the will of God, ought to be done and ought to be suffered. But fancy, as I said before, may magnify the suffering; and is it not right to reduce the exaggerations of fancy—when she conjures up ideal pictures, and makes them float before the eye of the mind in such a way as to terrify and disturb it? Fancy is ever looking on to the possibilities of future life—and as she employs herself in framing cases where disgrace and poverty would be the sure effect of a literal adherence to the commandments of God, she may cause the man on whom she works to falter from his purpose of observing them. In other words, she may beset the commencement of his path as a Christian with such temptations as he has not strength for; and is it not right to allay the force of these temptations? To enter this path with any drawback whatever on the purpose of doing simply and entirely what God bids you, is to enter upon it with such a double, such an ambiguous, such a broken and divided sentiment within you, as to make a wrong outset, and as will never land you in a prosperous termination. If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But this sad work of mustering up exceptions, and brooding over the fancied impossibilities of the bidden obedience, and grafting our own moderate and practicable system on the unbending requisitions of the great Lawgiver, and garbling the record of His counsel, and modifying the plain and undeniable sense of His communications, and compounding matters between His express authority and our clinging attachment to the ease and interest of the world—I say this work of secret hypocrisy, which carries in it a flinching of purpose from the will of God, under the prospect of some future and imagined possibility, is just as hostile to our state as Christians, as if the possibility were turned into a fact, and there were on our part a flinching of performance from the will of God. In the one case you have a palpable deficiency of obedience in the outer man—in the other case, a concealed reservation of purpose in the inner man, bespeaking such a radical unfairness of heart as is sure to bewilder all our perceptions of divine truth, to give an unhingement to all our principles, to darken our views as well as to vitiate and enfeeble our practice, to de

pose conscience from its supremacy, to unsettle our faith in that testimony which we are doing the uttermost to resist and to mutilate—and, in one word, by provoking the Spirit of God to put all His counsels and all His illuminations away from us.

This propensity of the mind to run on to the conceivable cases of future history, and to dwell on the circumstances in which an entire and literal obedience would be so painful and so inconvenient, and so hard in its consequences, acts certainly as a temptation, disposing us to set aside the authority of the commandment. Now, it is observable, that our Saviour, even at the very outset of His addresses to those whom He called upon, said something to alleviate the force of this temptation. He occasionally said what had the effect of mitigating their apprehensions of all they had to lose and of all they had to suffer in the business of following after Him. He did not call His disciples to take His yoke upon them without telling them at the same time that his yoke was easy and His burden was light. He did not tell them to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, without telling at the same time that all other things should be added unto them. He did not tell them that no man could be His disciple who did not forsake all, without also telling them that every man who forsook all should receive an hundred-fold, even in this life, for what he had relinquished. Christians must be in readiness to give up all for eternity; but it is to be remarked that the apostles did not tell this to their disciples, without also telling them that, in point of fact, they should meet with an abundance of temporal enjoyments scattered along the road that leads to eternity. Paul tells his Christian friends by his example that they should count not their life dear unto them—but he also tells them that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come; and while all of them are made to know that the commandments of God lie most indispensably upon them, they are also made to know that these commandments are not grievous

In pursuance of this method, let me not attempt any deduction from the authority of any obvious commandment; let me not paralyze unto the death any one of the precepts before us, all of which have a living power of obligation; let me not dilute into utter insignificancy all that is here said about the duties of liberality and forbearance and resistance, and the love we should bear to the injurious and to enemies; but let me conceive an honest disciple to act upon the sense and the unadulterated impression of this passage, and gathering our anticipations of his future history from the Bible of God and the observations of man, we are convinced that in the actual exercise of the virtues here recommended, he will find how much the terrors of an alarmed imagination outstrip the realities of living experience.

You will therefore indulge me in this way of it. Instead of entering directly into the business of explaining, or of enforcing these precepts, I meet at the very outset of my attention to them with a kind of repulsive suspicion stirring in my own heart, and distinctly observable in the fears and countenance of others, about the extent of their obligation, and the practicability of their following. I make it my first and my foremost object to beat down this suspicion, to grapple with the difficulty which flashes upon me at the very first footstep of my being introduced into this field of contemplation, and, if possible, to get it disposed of—to do what I have already told you was done by Christ and His apostles—to alleviate the force of the temptation which meets you, not at the time when you are doing the requirements of this passage, not at the time when you are rendering to them the obedience of your actual performances, but at the time when you should be rendering to them the obedience of your honest and unreserved purposes—to clear away the obstacle which lies on the road to that singleness of aim and that full determination of loyalty to the God of heaven, without which the inner man is virtually and substantially in an attitude of rebellion. This I conceive to be a right and a useful preparation for the subsequent train of my argument, and I trust you will find that

when labouring, even on this preparatory ground, a something might be met with to throw light on the passage, and help to enforce and to illustrate the duties which are here laid down to us.

In pursuance of this, let me take up one of the exactions which are before us, even the one by which we are required when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also. The barrier which I am attempting to remove, and which lies in the way of an entire purpose to give to this precept an entire obedience, is the fearful suspicion, that if I resent not the indignity of the blow I shall throw myself open to every degradation of insult and of violence. Now, if I can remove this barrier, I shall clear away from the commencement of the path of practical obedience a temptation which, if yielded to, will vitiate that commencement. I shall remove a temptation in virtue of which a man's initiatory attitude may become a wrong one. I shall remove a temptation which, by poisoning and diluting the purposes of the mind, will infallibly impair even the visible aspect of the man's obedience and take away from the entireness of his outward performances. I am not at present standing on the high ground, that even though every species of degradation and violence should be the result of an unexcepted adherence to the will of God, they form but a small surrender when put by the side of a reversion so splendid as an eternity of secure and peaceful enjoyment. I am not admitting the justness of this fearful anticipation and then closing with you on the principle, that though it were realized, that would merely be laying upon you the light affliction which is but for a moment, and is as nothing to the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This is firm and solid ground at all times to stand upon; but in the present instance it is not necessary to repair to it. Instead of meeting the fearful anticipation in this way, I altogether refuse the justness of it. I deny the fact that degradation and violence will ensue to any Christian from his passive reception of a blow, submitted to under the force of a religious principle, and borne with an uncomplaining meekness of temper, and at the same time with that elevated sense of duty which spreads an aspect of sacredness over the whole of his observable history. If you are kept from the full purpose of submitting yourself to the precept in question by an apprehension of the indignities which the fulfilment of it might heap upon you, then I might say that, however well founded the apprehension should be, it is not enough to dissipate the obligation of a mandate issued from the legislature of heaven in terms of such round and unqualified deliverance as are employed in the text.

This is what I might say; but I am enabled to say more—that the temptation is a mere fictitious image conjured up by the fancy of man, ever breeding some extravagance or other to agitate and disturb him. Or go to the essential fountain of the matter—that is, to the fabrication of him in whom the power of misleading and deluding the children of Adam is vested for a season, even the father of lies, whose delight it is to lay some specious imposition or other before the eye of the mind, for the purpose of breaking in upon the universality of its purposes, and painfully disturbing its aspirations, in its initiatory endeavours after a pure and holy and complete and withal an unexcepted obedience. Now, my brethren, do you come forward and ask me what it is that entitles me to meet the apprehension in question by such a direct and immediate denial? I again repeat my contradiction to it, and I avow that I have at this moment as many arguments upon which to rest the evidence of this contradiction as there are human hearts and human countenances before me. I am supposing an humble and devoted follower of the Lord Jesus, with all the due meekness of the Christian temper, and all the lofty determination of Christian principle, passively to take the blow that has been inflicted on him; and the question I have to put is—where shall we find a man who, under such impressive circumstances as these, will be monster enough to repeat that blow? Sure I am, that throughout the whole extent of the random and indiscriminate multitude before me, there is not a single individual can be fixed upon who could thus brutally wanton it over the meek

and unresisting attitude of the saint who stood before him. Oh, no! my brethren, there is not one of you who, under the power of that moral recoil which would come upon your heart, and bear down all the vindictive purposes that stirred in it—there is not one of you who would not feel as irresistibly held back from the act of repetition as if the lifted arm were arrested in its midway course by a stroke of palsy, or the God of heaven, interposing at the critical moment in behalf of His faithful servant, had by a single miracle willed all its energies away from it. Could a single man be fixed upon who understood not what this recoil was, and had the atrocity of character to inflict the second blow on the cheek that was turned to receive it, the cry of execration from all his fellows would come upon him in one tide of overwhelming chastisement, and turning him into a victim of public wrath, would hunt him away beyond the outskirts of society. Now, what is this to say but that the suspicion in question is a bugbear? It has done a world of mischief by seducing many an inquirer from the singleness of a resolved loyalty to the God of heaven, and after all it gives evidence to the author from whom it comes by turning out to be a falsehood. It is hard, indeed, that that apprehension should corrupt the initiatory attitude of the soul, and should make it hesitate about the extent of that obedience that it is to render to the authority of Christ, and should detract from the entireness of its resolution to follow Him fully, and to cleave to Him with full purpose of heart; and it crowns the hardship of the whole circumstance when the thing apprehended is, after all, nothing better than a phantom flitting before the eye of a misled imagination. The thing apprehended, my brethren, will not happen. God has provided against it in the moral constitution of the species. He who wields an omnipotent sway over the movements of the spirit as well as over all the elements of the material creation, can turn the heart of every man whithersoever He will, and bind its every impulse towards the accomplishment of His promises in behalf of the meek and the righteous and the godly. Out of the materials of human character as it exists in society—deeply tainted and vitiated as it is by that sad hereditary disease which our first parents have entailed upon us—even out of these materials can God create a shield of protection for His servants which shall compass them about, and spread over them such a mantle of security as will leave them safe to go throughout all the departments of business and of intercourse, and to carry a most literal, a most scrupulous, a most exact obedience to all His requirements along with them. Your own experience demonstrates the truth of this in as far as the particular requirement I am now insisting on is concerned. The man who fearlessly commits himself to the performance of this requirement, up to the last jot and tittle of it, foolishly scrupulous as he may be thought, and fanatic as he may be called, will compel the homage of all his acquaintances, and no hand will ever rise in violence against him, and he will move his protected way throughout all the heats of human assailment; and instead of that indignity with which the false tempter tried to scare him away from the doing of the commandments, he will find that the faithful God has overshadowed him with a canopy of defence, and placed the homage of tenderness, and the salutations of respect, and the soothing civilities of friendship and cordial admiration on every side of him.

Speaking on the mere probabilities of human experience, I assert it of this man that he stands greatly less exposed to the outbreaks of rudeness or of violence than he who has cast off the spirit and the authority of this passage altogether, and who is jealous of his honour, and proudly disdainful of every encroachment upon his rights, and stands on the ready tiptoe of vindication for every one affront, real or imaginary. The passive, unresisting Christian may, according to the alarms of nature, be looked upon as exposed to every blast of human violence—but let him endure to the end, and let faith banish these alarms, and let him keep an unsullied and unmutilated integrity of obedience, and let him embark on

the field of duty with the single principle of acting up to all the requirements, and he will find how the field brightens and beautifies before him by every footstep of his advancement. He will find that in the keeping of the commandments there is great reward. He will find the groundlessness of those many apprehensions by which the great enemy of mankind tried to deter him from the service of heaven's Master, and an obedience to heaven's Lord. And for the future exposure to malignity and rudeness by which he tried to scare him away from the path that leads to eternity, he will find that even in time the kindliness of every eye will be drawn towards him, and all hostility and violence, as if arrested by the omnipotence of a charm, will be cleared away from his footsteps.

Before I conclude, I cannot but point your attention to the beautiful harmony that subsists between all this experience and the promises of Scripture. The meek, one would think, are ready to be overborne by surrounding violence, and yet God says the meek shall inherit the earth. The man who fears God, and reads this passage of His communication, will love his enemies; and God says—I will make the enemies of him who fears me to be at peace with him. Oh! pause, pause, my brethren, ere you suffer any apprehension whatever to mutilate the entireness of that prescriptive code which the Author and Finisher of our faith has bequeathed to us; and when I think of duties being ours and events being God's—when I think of His absolute control over the events of human society, and how He can turn the heart of man whithersoever He will—when I think of the way in which He has shielded the human species from the violence of the inferior creation, even by putting the fear of man and the dread of man upon all animals—when I think of the way in which He has shielded the passive recipients of a blow from the violence of their own species, by all those checks of delicacy and feeling which he hath laid on the whole mass of human society—when I further think of the harmony between this portion of human experience and the promises of the Bible, and I take a survey of the extent of these promises, I must protest against admitting the fear of any consequences whatever from trenching on the entireness of our purpose to yield an undeviating adherence to the precepts of the Bible; but knowing that all these consequences are in His hand and under His absolute direction, let us prove how fearlessly we confide in the providence and faithfulness of God by the evidences of a close, an assiduous, and an unexcepted observation carried round the whole compass and extent of the revealed law of God.

SERMON XXV.

*The Silver Shrines.**

"For a certain man, named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." —Acts xix. 24, 25.

There are two ways in which a certain air of secularity and of week-day earthliness might be imparted to a pulpit demonstration. It might be done by a preacher who pitches no higher than a worldly system of morals—who founds it on the inferior principles of interest and a reputation among men—who banishes away from it all that is heavenly and all that is peculiar in the spirit of the gospel—and who, while he pursues the details of civil, and social, and domestic economy, seems animated by nothing else than that bare consideration of propriety which it is competent for any man to entertain, though he

* Preached at Glasgow in February, 1817.

neither look upward to God nor onward to the judgment that is in reserve for him. Let it never be forgotten, that even in that heart where the spiritualities of faith have no occupation—that even in the bosom of him who never heeds his God, or casts one earnest regard towards the book of that message which reports to us His doctrine and His will, there may be a strong sense of moral rectitude, and a strong susceptibility to many of the finest touches of moral delicacy, and a ready movement of consent and of obedience to the impulses of honour and compassion and generosity, and all that is laudable or engaging in such a character may be either exemplified in the life, or urged, and urged most eloquently from the pulpit; and yet, neither in the one nor in the other may there be a single thought beyond the world, or a single virtue which shall not find in the world all its acknowledgment and all its reward.

But again, there may to the eye and the apprehension of some be the very same air of secularity in the lucubrations of him who wants to preach the whole system of human life with the entire spirit of the New Testament—of him who is for carrying forward its strictest and its loftiest requisitions into all the manifold varieties of human experience—of him who would like to exalt the character of the species from their affection for the things which are below to a supreme and predominant affection for the things which are above—of him who would not be for letting down by a single step the spiritual character of Christianity, but would like to fix and to realize it on all the concerns of life and on all the actual business of society. For, you will observe, that the lessons of theology may be dealt out to an audience in the terms of an abstract and lofty representation, and its well-built system of articles may be made to carry along with it the consent of every understanding, and its paramount authority over all the wishes of nature and of interest may be strenuously asserted on the one side, and be as unresistingly acquiesced in on the other, and all this without one stretch of application to the familiarities of the living and the acting man. And when this work of application is attempted—when the effort is made by the preacher to transplant this style of Christianity from speculation into practice—when, for this purpose, he follows your everyday path, and steps over the threshold of your family, and takes account of your doings in the market-place, and thrusts himself into the very heart of the secularities which engage you, and haunts the very footsteps you take from one transaction to another, and from one company to another, and keeps a wakeful eye on all the details of your ever-moving history, and, in a word, holds the faithful mirror to all that meets you, and takes you up from Sabbath to Sabbath, why, it may be felt by some that in the fact of doing so the teacher of Christianity is inflicting upon it an offensive desecration—that he is spreading a hue of earthliness over it—that he is debasing his subject by the vulgarities of tame and ordinary experience—that he is letting in upon a hallowed field such a plain familiarity of coloring as goes to mar and to violate the sanctity of its complexion, and making an invasion on the dignity of that pulpit which should be consecrated to the promulgation of religious truth in its most abstract, general, and elevated form.

Now, before I proceed to any further explanations, I must offer my protest against the whole drift and tendency of such an argument as the one I am now adverting to. I assert, with the most unqualified earnestness, that Christianity is the religion of life, and will bear to be carried in the whole extent of her spirit and of her laws throughout all the haunts and varieties of human intercourse—that her high pretension is to subordinate the every doing and the every interest of man to the regimen of her own unbending authority—that in her strictest and most essential character she may be introduced into the busiest walks of society, and there uphold her disciples in the exercise of that simplicity and godly sincerity which she lays upon them; and in opposition to all the alleged impracticabilities which are conceived to lie in the way of her full establishment over the acts and the consciences of our species, do I aver, that if she cannot be practical neither ought she to be preached—that if there be some

invincible necessity why she should be banished from any one of your employments through the week, then she ought to be banished from every one of our pulpits upon the Sabbath—that she is either everything or nothing—that she knows of no compromise between her own laws and the maxims of the world by some expedient of time-accommodating conformity—that she disclaims all these midway adjustments entirely—and if she is deposed from her right of paramount control over all the conceivable cases of human conduct, then let her also be deposed from the ostensible place she now holds in the eye of the country—let her very name be given up to public scorn—let her forthwith be abandoned to the utter contempt and negligence of mankind.

Let me assure you that there is no safe alternative between an entire Christianity and no Christianity at all—that the religion of the New Testament admits of no partitioning whatever—that what it professes to do is either thoroughly to reform the world, or to bring the world under the burden of a righteous and unescapable condemnation—and that whoever the individual be who refuses to give up his conformities, and to drink in the pure and unqualified spirit of the gospel, and fearlessly to renounce all for eternity, and to give his honest and aspiring energies to the love of God and a patient waiting for Christ, let him plead obstacles and impossibilities as he may, he has chosen to abide with a world which the Bible represents to be lying in wickedness—he keeps him by the broad way which leadeth to destruction—he turns a deaf ear from the call to glory and to virtue—he winds not up his resolves to the pitch of a fair and honest consent to Christianity—he is not willing to forsake all in the act of following after Jesus, or to be entirely what He would have him to be, or to do entirely what He would have him to do.

I feel urged to these observations by the power and the prevalency of a sentiment which I know to exist among you—that the realities of actual experience offer an insurmountable barrier against the lessons of Christianity in all the fulness and variety of their application—that what may sound very well from the pulpit on the Sabbath is altogether inapplicable to the familiar and every-day practice of the week—that what the preacher can dress out to your delighted imaginations in the form of a very specious and imposing plausibility, must just be thrown aside and forgotten when you repair to the scenes of ordinary merchandise, and get involved in the common run of its calls and its temptations and its cares—that some mysterious necessity exists upon earth for binding down all who live in it to a certain degree of conformity—that it is utterly impossible, under the actual habits and arrangements of society, to sustain the lofty practice or the lofty tone of a morality that is bent on the themes, and the contemplations, and the spiritual exercises of a celestial world:—in a word, that you are living in this world, and that, somehow or other, it is a world which raises an unconquerable obstruction to the purity and the elevation of the New Testament—and in this way has religion in the eyes of thousands got a visionary character impressed upon it. It is dethroned from the authority of a real and a living principle of conduct—it is reduced to an unsubstantial mockery, which may recur at intervals like a Sabbath charm upon the ear, without either entering the heart or vivifying the practice—and thus with many, and very many, who neither question its truth, nor resist its orthodoxy, nor trample upon its ordinances, nor vilify nor arraign its ministers as the useless advocates of an impracticable system, is it treated as a phantom of no power—a voice of no import and no significancy.

Now, how can you get at this very deep and general impression so as to reason it away, without descending upon that very field of experience on which it flourisheth? How can you accomplish the dislodgment of it, but by stepping abroad on that arena where its foundations are laid? How can you demolish this stronghold of resistance without taking an account of the pieces which compose it, and attending to the way in which they are framed together, so as to raise that fabric which it is our object to destroy? In other words, how can the argument we have stated be carried to its right conclusion without going into

details? without touching upon the force of those temptations which are felt every day at your shops and in your counting-houses? without accompanying you into the varied haunts and operations of merchandise? and finally, without borrowing an aid from the light of such demonstrations as will both serve to establish a point in political economy, and show the applications to life and to business which may be drawn from the morality of the New Testament?

But this, as I have already intimated, may in the eyes of some throw a revolting air of secularity over the whole speculation. It may be offensive to the unaccustomed ears of those who like to hear nothing but the transmuted orthodoxy of former days in its most general and unbending form, and are forgetful all the while of the minutely experimental applications, both to social and to domestic life, which characterized the teaching of the apostles. I should like you to give up this hereditary prejudice, and to get the better of a squeamishness that is so apt and so easy to be offended, and to remember that it likens you to those whom Paul called the weaker brethren, and to know that the best spirit of the gospel is when with the spirit of love there is mingled the spirit of power and of a sound mind. And therefore it is that I call upon you to bring the habit of a well-exercised discernment to this question, and to distinguish between the drift of an argument which goes to secularize what is Christian, and an argument which goes to Christianize what is secular—between an argument which brings down all that is heavenly to an earthly and a degraded standard, and an argument the honest aim of which is to bring up all that is earthly to a lofty and a celestial standard—to press home the gospel in all the extent of its requisitions, and thoroughly to infuse the whole system and business of human life with that very spirit which sustains tranquillity in the hour of death, and draws upon it the voice of approbation from the judgment-seat, and is at length admitted to flourish without impediment or alloy in the mansions of eternity.

In the instance before us, the attempt of Paul to introduce Christianity into the town of Ephesus was resisted—and that on the ground of its conceived hostility to the interests of a trade. It would have put an end to a particular manufacture. All the capital that was invested, and all the labour that was maintained in the business of making silver shrines for Diana, would have been thrown out of their wonted employment. This was the anticipated ruin which stood full in the eye of Demetrius and his brethren of like occupation—and with all the quick and sensitive jealousy of mercantile alarm did he stand up for the established idolatry of the town, and try to bear down the enterprise of the apostles by the tumult and the terror of insurrectionary violence.

Now, I cannot conceive how any, under the impression of Christianity being the true religion, should wish well to such a resistance. Even let the whole mischief be realized up to the full extent of the felt anticipation, ought it not to have been willingly borne in the course of instituting a pure and authentic worship on the overthrow of Paganism and all its revolting abominations? It is a painful spectacle, no doubt, for the eye to dwell upon, when over the whole field of its contemplation it sees nothing but ruined capitalists and starving artificers; but to the mind of him who rightly balances the consideration of good and of evil, of duty and interest, of moral principle and temporal advantage, it will be the instantaneous judgment that the spectacle, melancholy as it is, ought to be endured, rather than that Christianity should be rejected—that everything must be given up for its sake—and that it must ever be regarded as the richest blessing which can be conferred upon a country, even though the way to the final establishment of this religion should be paved upon the ruins of its commercial greatness.

But the father of lies is ever employed in magnifying his temptations, and it were not out of place to consider in how far he overcharged that picture of wretchedness which floated before the eye of the Ephesian silversmith. It is very true, that from the moment when the great goddess Diana came to be universally despised, there would be a uni

versal cessation of the demand for those silver shrines, the making of which brought no small gain unto the craftsmen. But in what way did it bring them the gain?—was it the mere working up of the article which brought to their door all the elements of comfort and subsistence for their families?—was there anything in the particular mode or exercise of industry which carried the power of wealth or of maintenance along with it?—would the mere employment of itself have fed or have clothed them? From what source, I ask, did they draw the revenue which upheld them?—was it from the handiwork, or from the price paid for the handiwork?—was it from any active ability on the part of the manufacturer, or from an ability on the part of purchasers to afford them the price of the manufactured article? Why, my brethren, all that the manufacture could do was to produce its own commodity. The gain which accrued to the workmen was drawn from another quarter entirely. All the bread which it enabled them to purchase for their children, and all the substantial comfort with which it cheered the masters of so many a household establishment—and all the joyous spectacles which it reared of a whole street occupied by thriving and industrious families—every one of these elements lay comprised in one general object which embraced and provided for them all—not in the shrines, but in the price that was paid for them—not in the productive powers of the manufacturer, for from this source nothing could be made to emanate but shrines, but in the ability of those who purchased them—not in the handiwork, but in the effective demand of a previous and independent ability for the article that was wrought.

Now, mark it well, that though Paul had by the achievement of a single day christened the whole population of Ephesus, he would only have extinguished the taste for shrines, but he would not have reduced by a single iota the ability to purchase them. He would have put an end to the manufacture, we grant you, but there was nothing in his Christianity that could at all touch or impair the fund out of which flowed the gain and the maintenance of the people who were employed in it. The convert ceased his demand for shrines, but he did not on that account lose that portion of his revenue which went to defray the cost of them. This was still in reserve, and would in point of fact be discharged on other articles of expenditure. The ability of consumers to furnish a profit to the capitalist and a subsistence to the artificer, was just in every way the same after this revolution in the faith of the people as before it. One of the old channels through which it found its way to the encouragement of industry was doubtless abandoned, but as soon as some substitute for shrines had been devised for taking off the unexpended increase, another channel would open, and we should behold as copious a distribution of all the elements of comfort as before, throughout as wide an extent of a working and a trading population.

That there would be all that temporary inconvenience and distress which arises from every sudden and unlooked-for shift in the state of the demand is undeniable. But it looked far more formidable in the eyes of Demetrius. Like many of the economists who have succeeded him, he saw in that measure, which would have done no more than change the direction of industry, a total and an irrecoverable extinction of it. What he honestly dreaded was a permanent blow to the trade of Ephesus—that she would, somehow, be shorn in part of her wealth and of her greatness—that a certain portion of manufacture, with all the benefit and subsistence it brought to families, would disappear from her. Nor did he see how soon her commerce would reascend to all its wonted prosperity—how it possessed an unquelled principle of vigour which made it to survive the shock of any sudden fluctuation—and that should every altar of Paganism be overthown, and the gospel in all its pure and holy influences reign with unrivaled ascendency over the hearts of a Christian people, there would, after a moral revolution so big to him with the imagination of manifold disasters, be as plenteous a circulation of gain among the craftsmen, as busy and animated a throng in the

market-place of his city, and a tide of exuberancy as full and as generous as ever, pouring forth from the various sources of nature and of Providence, throughout all her families.

And here do I make my confident appeal to the very oldest of our citizens —to those of them who have taken the profoundest interest in the history of commerce, and have kept the most wakeful eye upon all its alternations—I bid them repeat, upon their own experience, how often in the course of their lives an oppressive weight of despondency has been seen to come upon our people, and some great political movement, or some interception in the paths of our foreign intercourse, has deranged the existing operations—and as they looked at the mischief which lowered so portentously upon them, what. I would ask, was the degree of fearful anticipation which it inspired? Was it only the distress of a few months of which they were afraid? or was it the visitation of some fixed and irrecoverable disaster? Did not the city feel herself menaced by an evil of far more terrible import than such a temporary embarrassment as every change in the direction of trade must necessarily create? Was it not a permanent decline of trade, or a partial extinction of it, which appalled her; and how often, I ask, has this periodic alarm arisen and spread its anxious and disheartening gloom over the spirits of a brooding population?

And, I ask again, how often has this apprehension turned out to be a chimera? How often has prosperity's brightening day emerged, and with more vivid lustre than before, out of this little period of dark and troubled imaginations? How often has the city of our habitation broken her powerful and unfaltering way out of all the adversities which threatened to overwhelm her?—and tell me, ye sage and observant characters of half a century, as ye recount her seasons of dimness and distress, if e'er ye remember such a time when the boding cloud of mischief did not clear away, and the eye of a wakeful Providence did not again look out to shed its blessings and its smiles over as thriving and as populous a community as ever?

Such is the fact; and a very few repetitions of that one step in argument by which I attempted to meet the prophecy of Demetrius would complete the explanation. But this I forbear to prosecute, and think that I have gone far enough, in the place which I now occupy, when I have barely suggested it; and I shall only say, ere I proceed to the textual application of all this reasoning, that in every country where property is surrounded with the securities of justice, the processes of trade can no more be permanently arrested than the processes of vegetation—that the stamina of its continuance and extension are in every way as indestructible as even the elements of nature—and that as surely as the seasons revolve, and the fruits of the earth ripen in their wonted exuberancy for the subsistence of man, so surely will commerce be upheld at an average standard of greatness under all her fluctuations—and let her languish in her threatening periods of transition as she may, she will ever be found to weather and survive the shock of all moral and all historical changes.

There is one respect in which we differ from the people of Ephesus. The question is not now between the interests of trade and the admittance of the Christian profession into our country; but there may at times be a question still between the interests of trade and the adoption of a Christian measure in our country—and the very argument of Demetrius, the silversmith, may be set up in factious opposition against the advocates of a righteous cause—and the advancement of a moral or of a religious good may thus be retarded on some plea of mercantile policy—and the best and purest devices of philanthropists may be withstood and frustrated, because they involve in them the overthrow of some existing craft which brings no small wealth unto the capitalists, and no small gain unto the craftsmen—and, as if the interest that was thus supported would not be replaced by another interest of equal extent, which would grow and form from the

first moment of the measure being accomplished—would the measure be resisted with as much vehemence as if it involved the country in all the fatality of mischief, and the temporary evil arising from a mere change in the direction of trade would, if looked at through the mist of futurity, be magnified into the awful disaster of a permanent and ruinous invasion upon the trade itself—and thus might the defence of iniquities the most glaring and outrageous, be conducted in the very language and be falsely associated with the dearest objects of patriotism.

Let me relieve the generality of this argument by one illustration. Many of you remember the time when the natural enthusiasm of our country was kept at bay by the very argument of Demetrius—when the interest of trade was set up in resistance to all that justice could assert, or to all that compassion could plead, in behalf of outraged Africa—when it was said that the desolation of its families was essential to the maintenance of the families of Britain—when Parliament was overborne by pathetic representations from individuals who plead that their all would be dissipated, and from towns which maintained—and I believe honestly maintained—that their commerce would go into utter annihilation. It would have been our duty to have done what was righteous, even though all these anticipations had been realized. But look at the fact, and see what became of the bugbear when reduced to the dimensions of truth and of nature. Trace the history of that very town which sent forth the largest capital on these expeditions of barbarity. Tell me if she went into annihilation; or if in virtue of that vigorous principle of resurrection, in virtue of which commerce is ever found to break an unfettered way out of all its difficulties and alarms, she did not rise to a prouder elevation than in those days when she pursued her guilty career through the distress of unoffending habitations, and steeled her heart against the shriek of ravaged homes and desolated villages. No, my brethren! the argument was nothing against the urgency of so righteous a cause; but the argument was in itself a delusion, and should teach us how to distinguish between the inconveniencies of a change in the direction of trade, and the miseries of its final and irrecoverable extinction—and at all events never, never to give it the weight of one particle of *dust*, when set in array against either one demand of justice or one object of Christian policy.

I have hitherto confined myself to the most direct and obvious application of the text that has been submitted to you, and have scarcely broken ground on what I conceive to be by far the most useful and interesting of its applications. I have not had time to enter into any details of that way in which the fancied interests and necessities of trade are set up in opposition to the cause not of public but of personal Christianity. How out of its maxims and its usages there has arisen what I would call the wisdom of this world, which opposeth itself to the foolishness of preaching—how the principles of the gospel in all their extent and spirituality, are somehow or other conceived to be utterly inapplicable to the business of its week-day operations. And in this way has a strong practical barrier been raised against the admission of Christian truth in all its entireness, and against obedience to the lessons of Christian practice in all that power of universality which belongs to them. This my time at present will not permit me to enter upon, and therefore it is that I confine the argument of this day to one lesson which even still is capable of being turned to practical application. For, let it be observed, that Britain has not yet done with the magnificence of her moral career—that her watchful eye is still going to and fro upon the earth, and expatiates over the whole of its ample territory as a field for the plans and the adventures of benevolence—that under her auspices the gospel is breaking forth beyond the limits of Christendom—and whether we look to the accomplishment of her labours in distant lands, or to the efforts of her religious population after the establishment of perpetual and universal peace among the nations, we see an expansion in her designs which, if crowned with success, as they nobly were in the abolition of the slave trade

of Africa, bids fair to spread the belief and the obedience of the gospel over the whole extent of our habitable world. The interest of trade has been set up against these great operations, and it were well the argument of the Ephesian silversmith could be appreciated in all the impotence which belongs to it.

But I hasten to a conclusion; and however dimly you may perceive the bearing of all I have alleged on the cause of Christ in the great matter of personal religion, I trust that the day is coming when an enlightened world shall be brought to acknowledge how the authority of the gospel is paramount to all the imaginary interests of trade—how its pure and spiritual law should set aside all that is unchristian in its usages—how there is not one corruption of principle, or one relaxation from that simplicity and godly sincerity which it bears along with it, that the high and indispensable morality of the New Testament does not bid away,—that all its practical advantages might be realized, though its votaries were all thoroughly pervaded in all their desires and all their doings by the spirit of the gospel,—and that such a moral revolution, so far from arresting any one of the benefits of commerce, would give prosperity to all her movements, and make those comforts which follow in her train to flow as largely as ever over the nations and families of the world.

SERMON XXVI.

*The Foolishness of God Wiser than Men.**

"The foolishness of God is wiser than men."—1 Cor. i. 25.

If it be thought that this statement serves very much to reduce the importance of human learning, let it be observed, on the other hand, that still to human learning there belongs an important function in the matter of Christianity. One does not need to be the subject of a material impress upon his own person in order to judge of the accuracy between the device that is submitted to his notice and the seal that is said to have conveyed it. Both may be foreign to himself; and yet he, by looking to the one and to the other, can see whether they are accurate counterparts. And, in like manner, a man of sagacity and of natural acquirements may never have received upon his own heart that impression of the Bible which the Holy Ghost alone has strength to effectuate. But still, if such an impression be offered to his notice in the person of another, he may be able both to detect the spurious, and in some measure to recognize the genuine marks of correspondence between the contents of Scripture, on the one hand, and the creed or character of its professing disciple, on the other. It is well when such a man looks, in the first instance, to the written word; and by aid of the grammar and lexicon, and all the resources of philology, evinces the literal doctrine that is graven thereupon. It is also well when he looks, in the second instance, to the human subject, and by aid either of natural shrewdness or of a keen metaphysical inspection into the arcana of character, drags forth to light that moral and intellectual picture which the doctrine of the Bible is said to have left upon the soul. If there be a single alleged convert upon earth who cannot stand such a trial when fairly conducted, he is a pretender, and wears only a counterfeit and not the genuine stamp of Christianity. And thus it is, that he who has no part whatever in the teaching that cometh from God—who is still a natural man, and has not received the things of the Spirit, may, to a certain extent, judge the pretensions of him who conceives that the Holy Ghost has taken of the things of

* The date of this sermon I have not been able to ascertain.

Christ, and shown them to his soul. He can institute a sound process of comparison between the testimonies of Scripture, which a natural criticism has made palpable to him, and those traces of the soul which a natural sagacity of observation has also made palpable to him; and without himself sharing in an unction from the Holy Ghost, or being sealed by the Spirit of God unto a personal meetness for the inheritance of the saints, still may he both be able to rectify and restrain the escapes of fanaticism, and also to recall the departures that heresy is making from the law and from the testimony.

The work of Bishop Horsley against Unitarianism is a work which erudition and natural talent are quite competent to the production of. It is the fruit of a learned and laborious research into ecclesiastical antiquities, and a vigorous argumentatious application of the materials that he had gathered, to that controversy on the field of which he obtained so proud and pre-eminent a conquest. We would not even so much as hazard a conjecture on the personal Christianity of this able and highly gifted individual—we simply affirm, that for the execution of the important service which he at that time rendered to the cause, his own personal Christianity was not indispensable. And whether or not, by the means of a spiritual discernment, he was enabled to take off from the inscribed Christianity of the record an effectual impression of it upon his own soul, it was well that, by the natural expedients of profound sense and profound scholarship, he cleared away that cloud in which his antagonist, Dr. Priestly, might have shrouded the face of the record both from the natural and spiritual discernment of other men. It is possible both to know what the doctrine of the Bible is, and most skilfully and irresistibly to argument it, without having caught the impress of the doctrine upon our own soul. It is possible for a man not to have come himself into effective personal contact with the seal of holy writ, and yet to demonstrate the character of the seal, and purge away its obscurities, and make it stand legibly out, which it must do ere it can stand impressively out to the view of others. There are many who look with an evil eye to the endowments of the English Church, and to the indolence of her dignitaries; but to that Church the theological literature of our nation stands indebted for her best acquisitions; and we hold it a refreshing spectacle, at any time that meagre Socinianism pours forth a new supply of flippancies and errors, when we behold, as we have often done, an armed champion come forth in full equipment from some high and lettered retreat of that noble hierarchy. Nor can we grudge her the wealth of all her endowments when we think how well, under her venerable auspices, the battles of orthodoxy have been fought, that in this holy warfare they are her sons and her soldiers who have been ever foremost in the field, ready at all times to face the threatening mischief, and by the might of their ponderous erudition to overbear it.

But if human talent be available to the purpose of demonstrating the character of the seal, it is also in so far available to the purpose of judging of the accuracy of the impression. The work, perhaps, which best exemplifies this, is that of President Edwards on the Conversions of New England, and in which he proposes to estimate their genuineness by comparing the marks that had been left on the person of the disciple with the marks that are inscribed on the book of the law and of the testimony. He was certainly much aided in his processes of discrimination upon this subject by the circumstance of being a genuine convert himself, and so of being furnished with materials for the judgment in his own heart, and that stood immediately submitted to the eye of his own consciousness. But yet no one could, without the metaphysical faculty wherewith nature had endowed him, have conducted so subtle, and at the same time so sound and just an analysis as he has done; and no one without his power of insight among the mysteries of our nature—a power which belonged to his mind according to its original conformation—could have so separated the authentic operation of the word upon the character from the errors and the impulses of human fancy.

It is true that none but a spiritual man could have taken so minute a survey of that impression which the Holy Ghost was affirmed to have made through the preaching of the word upon many in a season of general awakening; but few, also, are the spiritual men who could have taken so masterly a survey, and that just because they wanted the faculties which accomplish their possessor for a shrewd and metaphysical discernment among the penetralia of the human constitution. It is thus that by the light of nature one may trace the characters which stand out upon the seal—and by the light of nature one may be helped at least to trace the characters that are left upon the human subject in consequence of this supernal application. Fanaticism is kept in check by human reason, and the soberness of the faith is vindicated. The extravagancies of all pretenders to a spiritual revelation are detected and made manifest, and the true disciple stands the test he is submitted to, even at the bar of the natural understanding.

We cannot take leave of Edwards without testifying the whole extent of the reverence that we bear him. On the arena of metaphysics he stood the highest of all his contemporaries, and that too at a time when Hume was aiming his deadliest thrusts at the foundation of morality, and had thrown over the infidel cause the whole *éclat* of his reputation. The American divine affords perhaps the most wondrous example in modern times of one who stood richly gifted both in natural and in spiritual discernment; and we know not what most to admire in him—whether the deep philosophy that issued from his pen, or the humble and child-like piety that issued from his pulpit—whether when as an author, he deals forth upon his readers the subtleties of a profound argument, or when as a Christian minister he deals forth upon his hearers the simplicities of the gospel—whether it is when we witness the impression that he made by his writings on the schools and high seats of literature, or the impression that he made by his unlaboured addresses on the plain consciences of a plain congregation. In the former capacity he could estimate the genuineness of the Christianity that had before been fashioned on the person of a disciple—but it was in the latter capacity, and speaking of him as an instrument, that he fashioned it, as it were, with his own hands. In the former capacity he sat in judgment as a critic on the resemblance that there was between the seal of God's word and the impression that had been made on the fleshly tablet of a human heart. In the latter capacity he himself took up the seal and gave the impressing touch by which the heart is conformed unto the obedience of the faith. The former was a speculative capacity, under which he acted as a connoisseur who pronounced on the accordancy that obtained between the obedience of the Bible and the character that had been submitted to its influence. The latter was an executive capacity, under which he acted as a practitioner who brought about this accordancy, and so handled the doctrines of the Bible as to mould and to subordinate thereunto the character of the people with whom he had to deal. In the one he was an overseer who inspected and gave his deliverance on the quality of another's work, in the other he was the workman himself—and while as the philosopher he could discern, and discern truly, between the sterling and the counterfeit in Christianity, still it was as the humble and devoted pastor that Christianity was made, or Christianity was multiplied in his hands.

Now, conceive these two faculties which were exemplified in such rare and happy combination in the person of Edwards to be separated the one from the other, and given respectively to two individuals. One of them would then be so gifted as that he could apply the discriminating tests by which to judge of Christianity—and the other of them would be so gifted as that, instrumentally speaking he could make Christians. One of them could do what Edwards did from the press—another of them could do what Edwards did from the pulpit. Without such judges and overseers as the former, the faith of the Christian world might be occasionally disfigured by the excesses of fanaticism; but without such agents as the latter, faith might cease to be found—and the

abuses be got rid of only by getting rid of the whole stock upon which such abuses are occasionally grafted.

It is here that Churches, under the domination of a worldly and unsanctified priesthood, are apt to go astray. They confide the cause wherewith they are intrusted to the merely intellectual class of labourers, and they have overlooked, or rather have violently and impetuously resisted the operative class of labourers. They conceive that all is to be done by regulation, and that nothing but what is mischievous is to be done by impulse. Their measures are generally all of a sedative, and few or none of them of a stimulating tendency. Their chief concern is to repress the pruriencies of religious zeal, and not to excite or foster the zeal itself. By this process they may deliver their Establishment of all extravagances, so as that we shall no longer behold within its limits any laughable or offensive caricature of Christianity; but who does not see that by this process they may also deliver the Establishment of Christianity altogether—and that all our exhibitions of genuine godliness may be made to disappear under the same withering influence which deadens the excrescences that occasionally spring from it. It is quite a possible thing for the same Church to have a proud complacency in the law, and argument, and professional science of certain of its ministers, and along with this to have a proud contempt for the pious earnestness and pious activity of certain other of its ministers—in other words it may applaud the talent by which Christianity is estimated, but discourage the talent by which Christianity is made; and thus, while it continues to be graced by the literature and accomplishments of its members, may it come to be reduced into a kind of barren and useless inefficiency as to the great practical purposes for which it was ordained.

To judge of an impression requires one species of talent—to make an impression requires another. They both may exist in very high perfection with the same individual, as in the case already quoted; but they may also exist apart, and often, in particular, may the latter of the two be found in great efficiency and vigour, when the criticism and the metaphysics necessary to complete the former of the two may be entirely wanting. The right policy of a Church is to encourage both these talents to the uttermost, and not to prevent the evils of a bad currency by laying such an arrest on the exercise of the latter talent as that we shall have no currency at all. It must be produced ere it can be assayed; and it is possible so to chill and to discourage the productive faculty in our Church as that its assaying faculty shall have no samples on which to sit in judgment. This will universally be the result in every Church where a high-toned contempt for what it holds to be fanaticism is the alone principle by which it is actuated, and where a freezing negative is ever sure to come forth on all those activities which serve to disturb the attitude of quiescence into which it has sunk and settled. The leading measures of such a Church are all founded on the imagination that the religious tendencies of our nature are so exuberant as that they need to be kept in check, instead of being in fact so dormant as that they need work and watchfulness, and all that is strenuous and painstaking in the office of an evangelist, for the purpose of being kept alive. The true Christian policy of a Church is to avail itself of all the zeal and all the energy which are to be found both among its ecclesiastics and its laymen for the production of a positive effect among our population—and then, should folly or fanaticism come forward along with it, fearlessly to confide the chastening of all this exuberance to the sense and the scholarship and the sound intellectual Christianity, for the diffusion of which over the face of our Establishment the Establishment itself has made such ample provision. Such is our impression of nature's lethargy and deadness that we are glad when anything comes forward, that we are pleased to behold any symptoms of spiritual life or vegetation at all; and so far from being alarmed by the rumours of a stir and a sensation and an enthusiasm in any quarter of the land, we are ready to hail it as we would the promise of some coming regeneration. A policy the direct opposite of this is often the reigning

policy of a Church, and under its blasting operation spurious and genuine Christianity are alike obliterated. The work of pulling up the tares is carried on so furiously that the wheat is pulled up along with it; the vineyard is rifled of its goodliest blossoms, as well as of its noxious and pestilential weeds; and thus the upshot of the process of extirpating fanaticism may be to turn the fruitful field into a wilderness, and spread desolation over all its borders.

A Church so actuated does nothing but check the excrescences of spiritual growth, and may do it so effectually as to reduce to a naked trunk what else might have sent forth its clustering branches, and yielded in goodly abundance the fruits of piety and righteousness. There is no positive strength put forth by it on the side of vegetation, but all on the side of repressing its hated overgrowth. It makes use only of one instrument, and that is the pruning-hook, as if by its operation alone all the purposes of husbandry could be served. Its treatment of humanity proceeds on such an excessive fertility of religion in the human heart, that all the toil and strenuousness of ecclesiastics must be given to the object of keeping it down and so confining it within the limits of moderatism, instead of such a natural barrenness, that this toil and this strenuousness should rather be given to the various and ever-plying activities of an evangelist who is instant in season and out of season. It is thus that the outfield of sectarianism may exhibit a totally different aspect from the inclosed and well-kept garden of an Establishment. In the former there may be a positive and desirable crop along with the weeds and rankness which have been suffered to grow up unchastened. In the latter there may be nothing that offendeth save the one deadly offence of a vineyard so cleansed and purified, and thwarted in all its vegetative tendencies as to offer from one end to the other of it one unvaried expanse of earthliness.

We therefore do wrong in laying such a weight of discouragement on the labourers who produce—and throwing the mantle of our protection and kindness only over the labourers who prune. And what, it may be asked, are the ingredients of mightiest effect in the character and talents of a productive labourer? They are not his scholarship, and not his critical sagacity of discernment into the obscurities of Scripture, and not his searching or satirical insight among the mysteries of the human constitution. With these he may be helped to estimate the Christianity that has been formed, and to lop off its unseemly excrescences, but with these alone he will never positively rear on the foundation of nature the edifice itself. This requires another set of qualifications, which may or may not exist along with that artificial learning to which we trust an adequate homage has been already rendered by us.

We have already done homage to the importance of human learning on this matter. It acts as a fly to regulate the operation, but it is not the power which gives impulse to the operation. For the putting forth of this power we must look to men who bear upon their own hearts the impress of Christianity, whether they are with or without a very high and artificial scholarship. We must look to those who have the Spirit themselves, and who have power in their intercessions with God, and prevail so as to obtain the Spirit for others. We must look to those on whom the simple essentials of the Bible have made their practical impression, and who, through the very process of enlightening which they have experienced in their own souls, are able to reflect that process back again on the souls of those in whose behalf they are labouring. And we repeat it, that in both of our established Churches there is a high-toned contempt, not for that agency which can learnedly demonstrate the characters of the Bible, or cast a shrewd and intellectual regard on the impression that has been made by it, but for that agency which takes up the Bible and actually makes the impression—for that unlettered Methodism which in England has wrought its miracles, not of imaginary but of substantial grace upon the people—for that Sabbath teaching which, in the hands of lay Christians, promised fair in our own country to be a mighty instrument for reclaiming the population

of our cities from the habits of profaneness and profligacy into which they have wandered.

There is a disposition on the part of official and formally constituted ecclesiastics to regard such men as the quacks or empirics of theology, who have not had the benefit of their finished education, who belong not to the regular faculty, and of whom therefore it may be feared that they are the bearers of deleterious poison which acts with mischievous effect on the moral and intellectual health of the great mass of the peasantry—those ready dupes of imposture whether in divinity or in medicine. They forget that there is not a perfect resemblance between these two professions—that while in the one human science works the whole practical effect, in the other human science works none of it—that they are very plain doctrines of the Word, which are as accessible to the mind of a peasant as of a philosopher, urged home with efficacy by God's Spirit—that Spirit which is surely as ready to be given to the ministrations of humble piety as of accomplished learning, seeing that God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble—that it is thus that Christians are actually made and multiplied in our land. And thus we fear that, in the contempt with which in both our Establishments, all the activities of religious zeal are now-a-days regarded—in the intolerance which they feel towards our more ardent and painstaking operatives in the cause, the Churches of both countries, while they retain the literary accomplishment which has so long adorned them, may wither into a kind of barren and useless inefficiency as to the great practical purposes for which they were ordained. And that mighty work of agency, which, if they were each to employ within their own bosom, might be turned to so mighty an account in the work of converting and moralizing our people, may either be discouraged into apathy or driven beyond the pale of the Establishment—may transfer to others the whole glory of extending and keeping alive the Christianity of our nation.

SERMON XXVII.

*Duties of Masters and Servants.**

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a a Master in heaven."—Col. iv. 1.

It is very observable of Christianity, that while at one time it equalizes all the various ranks and orders of life, at another it presses the performance of such duties, and the practice of such submissions upon the lower orders as would seem to recognize a wider distinction between one man and his fellow than was ever contended for by the most groveling minions of despotism. It tells us of the essential equality of all men. It is ever coming into contact with the most striking and important points of this equality. It, with an intrepid disregard of all the power and of all the grandeur of this world, delivers such doctrines as are most humiliating to the pride of the wealthy, and as are most elevating to the hopes and most sustaining to the dignity of the poor. This is a distinction which it makes little account of—when employed on those commanding generalities of the species, which form the great theme of the revelation from God to the world. And whether it adverts to the birth of man or to his dissolution—to the state of nakedness in which he came into the world, or to the state of nakedness in which we go out of it—to the corruption of the body after death, or its resurrection to the judgment-seat—to the common relationship of all with our Lawgiver, or the common need and dependence of all upon one Saviour—in a word, whether it adverts to the infirmi-

* Preached at Glasgow, in June, 1817.

ties of our present condition, or to our capacities for the bliss and immortality of another—in all these cases does it overlook the varieties of rank and of fortune, and viewing the whole brotherhood of mankind as the members of one common family, does it speak the same language to all, and hold out to all the same offers and the same invitations and the same injunctions.

But one striking attribute of the Christian revelation is, that it leaves no one condition of humanity unprovided for. It not merely provides a rule and a doctrine for man in the general, but it has also its rules and its doctrines for all the leading specialties of office and of station which occur in society. And when, in particular, it condescends upon the duties of a servant, which it repeatedly does, one were apt to think that it assigns him to such a depth of humiliation as to inflict a positive outrage on the rights of our common nature. I am not adverting to the duty of not purloining—for this is not an apposite exemplification of the remark—this duty forming only part of a fair and equal interchange of obligation between the parties. But what are we to think of servants being enjoined to obey their masters in all things, and instead of doing so in the spirit of a grumbling reluctance, to do it heartily and cheerfully, and of good-will? What are we to think of servants, subject as they are to the outbreaking of the most unmerited and ungenerous abuse from their masters, being called upon not to answer again? Nay, what are we to think of the passive and the peaceful demeanour they are called upon to observe, and that not merely when they suffer, but when they suffer wrongfully?—of their being told that it is not enough that they take it patiently when they are buffeted for their faults, but that they should take it patiently even when they do well and are buffeted? Oh! how after the burden of such an indignity as this, can the condition of a servant be redeemed from the imputation of being indeed the most disgracefully ignoble that any son or daughter of humanity can fill! What security is there for the protection and the privilege of this numerous class of society? and what remaineth either to exalt their office, or to sustain the spirit of its occupier, if it shall thus be thrown open and defenceless to the caprices of every petty tyrant, and no resistance be allowed to the wantonness and the wilfulness of his manifold provocations?

And yet, my brethren, the spirit of a servant never reacheth to a truer or more noble elevation than when—keeping down the tendencies of nature in submission to the will of Christ—he maintains an uncomplaining patience under all the wrongs and all the severities which are inflicted upon him—and when instead of resisting any insult or any aggravation he may meet with, he offers it up in silence unto the Lord. He never stands upon higher ground than when this is his conduct and these are the principles upon which he rests it. He never so strikingly puts forth the high attitude of a Being who is immortal, and who knows his immortality, as when, upon his path being crossed by injury, he mildly forbears all anger, and resolutely bridling the expression of it, quietly commits his judgment unto God. His mind is never so filled with sublime anticipations, nor do the movements of his inner man ever betoken so much of the true sense and soul of dignity, as when, looking up to the Lord Jesus Christ as his master, and looking forward to the reward of the inheritance, and fired with the ambition of adorning the doctrine of the Saviour in all things, and having the Spirit of glory and of God resting on him, he can move his duteous and unruffled way amid the injustice of a master's exactions, or the still more galling injustice of a master's unmerited reproaches and unmerited frowns. The long-suffering of a Christian servant may in these circumstances look a tame and a pusillanimous thing to those who look to it with this world's eyes, and pass their judgment on it upon the world's principles; but I am quite sure, that in the high estimate of eternity, a servant never makes a greater exhibition of character, or reaches to a nearer resemblance of the Godhead himself, than when he comes off a conqueror from such a trial of the charity that endureth—and when I put him by the side of the fretful oppressor, who is either so

unprincipled as to defraud him, or so outrageous as to be ever and anon pursuing him with his restless and vindictive effusions. neither my reverence for his superior wealth, nor for the chair of little brief authority on which he sits, can restrain me from offering to the attendant who toils beside him, the tribute of a more honourable testimony, and the homage of a profounder reverence.

But this is not all which Christianity has done for that humble class of society whose cause every minister of Christianity should rejoice to advocate. It has not merely dignified the character of the believing servant, by supplying him with prospects which serve to cover and nobly to redeem all the wrongs and provocations that may be laid on him in this world—wherever its influences extend, it establishes in behalf of the servant a firmer protection than can be done by any one of the artificial institutions of society. Law may shield him from the grosser violations that are made on his person or his property; but law cannot enter under his master's roof, and there protect him from the countless ills of domestic tyranny. It cannot lay its restraints on the tone, or the habit, or the manner of a domineering insolence. It cannot forbid the constant harassings of peevishness. It cannot soften or relax the brooding scowl of displeasure. It cannot put an interdict on those haughty expressions of imperiousness or disdain which are felt by many a servant to be a greater hardship than all the drudgery that is laid upon him. It cannot make it imperative upon his superior ever to feel in his heart a cordiality towards all his domestics and ever to maintain in all his intercourse with them a discreet and a kindly utterance. It cannot thus sweeten the toils of his employment, or make his burden feel light unto him. But what law cannot do for him, Christianity can do. It can enter his master's conscience. It can pour its influence over all the exercises of his history. It can subordinate him wholly to the authority of its doctrines and its laws. It prescribes a duty to the master as well as to the servant; and there is not an injunction which it lays upon the latter, without a counterpart injunction which it lays as bindingly and as imperatively upon the former. If you are charged against the act of trespassing upon their property by purloining it—they are as expressly charged not to withhold from you any rightful claim, but to give you those things which are just and equal. If you, on the one hand, are forbidden to answer again—they, on the other, are forbidden the use of all insolent and abusive language. Ye masters, do the same things to them which I now enjoin them to do unto you, forbearing threatening. If you are reminded of your relation to Christ as His servant, they are also reminded of the very same relation, and are taught to recollect how they have a Master in heaven, and how with Him there is no respect of persons. And finally, if you are not to presume upon this equality because you have believing masters, but rather on that account to do them service—they, on the other hand, are to have a constant respect to the consideration that you are brethren, and heirs of the same hope, and fellow-travellers to the same eternity.

Thus let Christianity find an entrance among you, and all will be righted. It will do more both for peace and for enjoyment than can be done by any political adjustment whatever. It reaches where law cannot reach, and goes greatly beyond it in the provision which it makes both for the respect that should be awarded to the higher, and for the indulgence and security that should be extended to the lower orders of society. It disposes the former party to concede a great deal more than would satisfy the latter, and the latter party to submit in patience to a great deal more than would ever be claimed or exerted by the former. All that can be achieved by a legal or political contest is, that the parties meet each other half-way—all it can do is to draw a rigid line of demarkation, beyond which neither party is to pass without the outcry of resentment being lifted up by the other, or the proceedings of resistance being entered upon. Give me the most pure and efficient system of law in a country without Christianity, and you may see the parties standing where they should be, but standing in the proud attitude

of defiance, and regarding each other with the haughty feelings of jealousy and disdain. Give me Christianity, and in addition to all the security of law, which in no wise or enlightened country will ever be neglected, you will see each party going beyond the rigid line of equality, and that not for the sake of any selfish acquirement to itself, but for the sake of some free and generous concession to others. You will see the limit of strict reciprocity often disregarded and trodden upon—not, however, in the way of encroachment, but in the way of kind and effusive liberality; and instead of a wall of partition, guarded with fearful vigilance by those who stand on the respective sides of it, would you see them mingling together as a wide and common species, and even going beyond the rigour of integrity in the exercise of all the humilities of the gospel, and in the fair flow and indulgence of all its charities.

But I must not forget that the text only speaks of those things which are just and equal, and that it therefore confines me to the duty which lies upon masters not to trespass on the line of equity in their dealings with their servants—not to exceed in their demands upon them the terms of their agreement, and not to fall short of those terms in the awarded remuneration—not to exact more work from the servant than was either specified by the express stipulation, or than the general habits of the place rendered a matter of clear and honest understanding between the parties—not to fall short in the amount of the payment, or what is of mighty importance to the comfort of a laboring family, not to come behind the time of the payment of the wages that are due to him. In a word, were I to ramify the text into all its applications, I might urge it upon you masters to be punctual in all your transactions with those who are beneath you—amid all the laxity and delay and cravings for a little more indulgence which are so usual in the world of merchandise, to struggle that your servants at least shall not suffer from the operation of such a habit—to make at all times a determined exception in behalf of those who have the whole of their subsistence depending on the wages they so hardly earn from you—to make it a primary and indispensable point of obligation that their claims shall be attended to, and rather than that a single dependent should remain unpaid, to make every retrenchment upon your luxuries and your comforts; and above all, what more frequently disables a man from doing justice to those whom he employs than anything else, to make a most strict and conscientious retrenchment upon your speculations.

But the occurrence of the term speculation suggests to me one remark, which I beg to come forward with. You will most readily grant that you have no right, for the purpose of regaling your appetite for delicacies, to keep a costlier table than you are able to defray, and thus for the sake of a present indulgence, to trench upon that fund out of which your servants should obtain the full and regular amount of their wages. Now extend this principle.—You have no right, for the purpose of regaling your avaricious desires after a fortune, to embark on a costlier speculation than is warranted by your capabilities and your means, and thus for the sake of a future prospect to put to hazard the maintenance of all those families whose fathers you have pressed into the service of your ambition. You have no right to put to a desperate throw, I will not say your own wealth, but those numerous pittances which, in the shape of unpaid work, constitute the dependence and the all of those artificers whom you may seduce to share in the risk, and whom you may involve in the ruin of some rash and delusive enterprise. If it be a piece of the most selfish inconsideration toward the servant whom you hire, or toward the dealer from whom you buy, to dress more magnificently, or to build more magnificently, or to entertain more magnificently, than is consistent with the power of punctually discharging the wages of the one or the accounts of the other—then be assured, my brethren, that it is in every way as substantial, and I am sure as calamitous a piece of injustice to the workmen of this city, to trade more magnificently than on every principle of sober-minded

computation is consistent with the power of rendering to them the stipulated return for the service they have yielded. In calling upon you to repress this spirit of adventure, and to confine your measures within the compass of your means, I am pleading their cause—I am pointing your eye to a moral check upon that mischievous spirit of ambition which I honestly believe to be the main cause of the sufferings of our country—I am telling you that he who hasteth to be rich not only pierces himself through with many sorrows, but involves himself in the guilt of many crimes—that among others he commits an act of cruelty upon those whom he has induced to follow in the train of his personal aggrandizement—that, be it with thoughtlessness or be it with deliberation, he has, for the sake of self, committed the interest of the poor man and of the labourer to an ocean of dark and hazardous contingencies—that he, and such as he, are deeply responsible for those successive tides of adversity which set in at intervals upon the land—and that though every future harvest should pour abundance into our granaries, and every future Parliament should glow with virtuous and enlightened patriotism, and every future administration should give its unwearied labours to the cause of freedom and the best interests of the people, yet with this single corruption in the hearts of private individuals—with this rancorous and unbridled fervency of desire after wealth venting itself forth on extravagant speculation—with this sanguine and adventurous spirit which outruns calculation, and dashes its impetuous way, unmindful of the ruin which it scatters among the habitations of industry—with this, I say, in as tumultuous and unchecked operation as ever, we shall be doomed to see still what we have seen before—the ebbs and the flows of an unceasing alternation—at one time the feverish career of giddy and high-flown enterprise and at another the sure visitation of distress, with all the bitterness of its outcries and all the gloom of its forebodings.

Suffer me one word more upon this part of my subject. I know as well as you that misfortune, the pure and single operation of misfortune, may entail even on a Christian merchant the adversity of a ruinous and unlooked-for visitation. And therefore it is not for us to point the finger of condemnation at any individual, but it is our part to bear in mind how it is to another that he standeth or falleth; and we in humility and charity should abstain from the exercise of judgment on individual cases, and in no one case forget how the misfortunes of the virtuous ought with every generous bosom to place them on a higher elevation of respect than before, and to draw toward them a more affecting sentiment both of tenderness and veneration. But, on the other hand, you know as well as I do, that misfortune is not the alone cause of vicissitude in the history of business—that there is such a thing as the spirit of illegitimate adventure, which, being the very spirit of idolatry to the world, comes within the scope of those denunciations which ought to be thundered from the pulpit on every shade and degree of ungodliness; and that while we mean not the slightest insinuation against a single person concerned in these transactions, this general spirit ought to be contended with and exposed in all its culpability, and protested against not merely on account of its character, but on account of its consequences, as a spirit which in itself argues an utter devotedness to the creature, and which in effect robs many an industrious and deserving family of their just and equal expectations.

I conclude my present remarks upon this text with an observation which I think will recommend itself to your own experience of human life and character. You will perceive that the apostle is giving the advice of my text to his own formed and educated Christians. He is asking those who were masters among the members of the Church at Colosse to give such things as are just and equal to their servants, and he recommends this advice by a most affecting and at the same time an exclusively religious motive, "You know that you have a Master in heaven"—one to whom you are looking up for the reward of your services—one who as He has said that as you forgive others, so will you be forgiven, also says, that with what measure you mete it shall

be measured to you again; and have a care lest by the act of withholding from your servants their just and lawful right, your Master who is in heaven shall on the great day of account lay upon you some awful visitation of remembrance and retribution. Observe, then, that all this right and becoming conduct which he is prescribing to masters, is conduct subordinated to the influence of a religious consideration and the power of a religious motive. Now, it so happens that in this highly liberal and cultivated country, there are many who require the operation of no such motive to incline them to all the more obvious and ordinary acts of justice toward their servants and inferiors. There is positively a very great number of men whom I could name, and whom I could not call Christians and yet who at the same time could not find it in their hearts to disappoint the just expectations of their dependents, or to fall by a single iota behind the fulfilment of their more obvious and ordinary claims. I have seen men who, without Christianity at all, would positively quiver with indignation at the idea of a poor man and his family being reft of their dues. They, by a pure movement of generosity, would cheerfully undertake their cause—they would spurn with their whole soul taking any advantage whatever of a servant's helplessness or a servant's simplicity; and to them the meanness and the inhumanity of such a proceeding would altogether appear so odious as positively to revolt them against the imagination of it. All this, you will observe, without Christianity —without the impulse of any such motive as is supplied by a reference to God as our Master who is in heaven—without the mingling, in fact of any religion in the business at all, but by the pure force of such a natural generosity of heart as is, to speak the truth, very prevalent in this our age among the higher orders of society. Now, for the sake of the important theological lesson upon which this question bears, let me observe, that the general spirit of one age is often more favourable to the growth of certain accomplishments of character than the general spirit of another age, and that such is the influence of this general spirit in the way of example and of repetition as to beget certain social and humane virtues, independently of the operation of any religious principle whatever; and that thus what would need the stimulus of a Christian motive in some former generation, might in the present generation be very extensively practised without the operation of any such motive at all. It marks a very rude and untamed state of society in the days of the apostle, that in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, he should find it necessary to lay it down, with the authority of inspiration, as one of the requisites of a good bishop, that he should be no striker.

A Christian motive was necessary, it would appear, to keep a bishop of those days from doing a thing which any bishop or minister now-a-days would be restrained from doing by a sense of its utter vulgarity and disgracefulness. A good bishop of those days would not do the thing because he saw a prohibition against it in the writings of the apostle, and to do it in the face of this prohibition would be ungodly. But any bishop, good or not, of the present day, would not do the thing because, whether he saw the prohibition or not in the book of God, he feels all the power of a prohibition in the general standard of manners, and to do it in the face of this standard would be ungentlemanly. I bring this forward merely in the way of illustration. For the truth is, that in respect of the duty of my text, too, the sense of the age has undergone a wondrous revolution, and has been greatly softened and liberalized since the apostle's days. If the picture which James gives of the rich men of his time were to be realized on an individual now, it would have the effect of making that individual an outcast from society. Were a man only convicted of keeping back by fraud the hire of his labourers, it would bring down upon him the execration of his fellows as well as the denunciations of God's outraged law. The latter motive might be essential to the restraining of men from this cruelty in cases where the former motive had no operation; but where the former motive has operation, as it has to a very great and general

extent in our own country, then without the operation of the latter motive at all, or, in other words, without one particle of homage to the author of Christianity, might we see men exhibit a most rigid adherence to the duty of my text, spurning with a quick sense of honour the idea of any departure from it, most faithfully acting up to all the ordinary claims and expectations of their dependents. and earning a character in society as the most humane and righteous and honourable of its members.

SERMON XXVIII.

*Sermon to the Young.**

"Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried. and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."—ZACH. vii. 13.

HE who cried in the first clause of this verse is the Lord Himself, as is evident from the verses that immediately precede this text. The thing which the prophet complains of is, that when the Lord of hosts spake to them on a former occasion, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother—when He said this to the people of the land they refused to hearken, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; and "they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law. and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in His Spirit by the former prophets;" and therefore it was that there came a great wrath upon them from the Lord of hosts. And no doubt when visited with affliction, when brought very low because of their sins, when death and destruction stared them in the face, and the urgent desire of their hearts was for deliverance, they gave vent to their desire by prayer. But mark the upshot of their having refused to hear God on a former occasion—He refused to hear them on the present occasion. And this is the meaning of the text—"Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."

Now most of you who are here present are young in life, and perhaps scarcely have known what it is to be afflicted. At all events, there is nothing more likely than that many of you may have thought little of the time when the last sickness shall come upon you, and you shall have at last taken yourselves to the bed from which you are never more to rise. Full of life and vigour, and rejoicing, perhaps, in the prospect of many days, your imagination may never have seriously dwelt on that awful event which is certainly coming upon you, even as it has come upon all who have gone before you. Your hearts may have been altogether with lessons, and play, and companionship, and such work as parents or masters have put into your hand—and little may you have reflected that, after all, the end of the whole matter on earth is, that you shall die—and that every minute which you breathe brings you that minute nearer to the time at which you shall die—and that this terrible day is coming upon you with a speed and a certainty from which there is no escaping. These are simple truths, my young friends; but it is just from the want of being impressed by plain and simple truths that there is so much of sin and suffering in the world. It is just because men will not take heed to the near and the obvious matters that lie before them, that they have gone so far astray in wickedness, and that so many are on the road to ruin everlasting. The great and practical error of man does

* The date attached to the original short-hand manuscript of this sermon is October 31, 1822. Between this date, and that of the discourse immediately preceding, the reader will perceive that an interval of more than five years occurs—an interval which he is to imagine as filled up by those discourses which have already been published.

not lie in his being ignorant of what is difficult to understand, but in his being heedless of that which is familiar to all understandings. It is not so much because my people will not learn, but because my people will not consider, that they are found on the path which leadeth to the chambers of hell. And so it is with many of you. You do not need to learn that you have to die; for this is what you all know as well as I can tell you. But you stand lamentably in need of more thoughtfulness so as that you may consider, and hold it often in serious and solemn remembrance, that you are to die. This is what I want to impress upon you now. The dying bed will come—a weary season of pain and breathlessness and insufferable languor is before you. The path that leads from the present world to the next world has to be traversed by all who are here present. How soon I know not; but that it will come sooner or later, you are all as well assured as I can possibly be. It is not a new truth that I offer to your notice, but an old, that I would earnestly set forth to your thoughtful and tender and feeling recollection.

For think, my young friends, what in all likelihood will take place on that affecting occasion. You will then be standing on the brink of eternity, and it will look a dark and awful transition to cross over from the land of sense to the vast and unknown land that is before you, and a certain dread will lay hold of you, as you contemplate the fathomless abyss into which you are sinking; and then under the urgency of the fearfulness that may have overtaken you, will you gladly cry to the Lord that He may guide you in safety through the mysterious passage, and land you on a peaceful and happy shore. And if the thought of guilt shall then visit your bosoms, this may bring the foretaste of hell along with it—and so, amid the tossings of a sinner's restless bed, may you betake yourselves to prayer, and cry to the Lord for deliverance.

Now the thing which so deeply concerns you to know is, that when you cry then He may not hear you, and that because He is crying now, and you do not hear Him; you may lift the voice of prayer upon your death-beds, and He may turn a deaf ear thereto, because now in the heyday and cheerfulness of youth, when He lifts the voice of authority and bids you stand in awe and sin not, some of you, it is feared, are turning a deaf ear to all His warnings, and will none of His reproof. If you are heedless and unconcerned now about what He says to you, this is the return that will come upon you—He will then laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. Oh, how much it concerns you to lay up through life what you will find in stead and in store when you come upon your death-beds! This is the simple expedient by which you may lay up a provision for the day of your extremity: Listen to God now, and He will not refuse to listen to you then. Turn to Him a willing ear in the morning of your days, and in the evening of your days you will experience Him to be a God of good-will and of graciousness. Remember your Creator in youth, and He will not forget you in old age. Be found of Him now when He is seeking after you—so that when you come to the bed of your last agonies, you will not have a Saviour to seek, but a Saviour to enjoy.

But to be more particular, we should specify what is the cry or proclamation that God is lifting up now, and by your neglect of which you may bring down upon you God's neglect of you then, when the hour and the power of darkness shall at length overtake you. In the text it was God's law that He was proclaiming; it was His word which by His spirit He had put into the mouths of the old prophets; this was what He spoke in the hearing of the people, and they made their hearts, it is said, as an adamant-stone against Him. They put a hardy and resolute defiance against the calls of authority and the threats of vengeance. When he entreated their obedience, they disregarded. In the day of their fancied security they refused all His expostulations—so that when the day of their disaster came, and they turned to the Lord, as they did not hear when He cried to them, so He would not hear when they cried to Him.

And thus, it is to be feared, is it with many, and very many, of our present reckless generation. He is calling to you directly by His Spirit, when the law, written in your consciences, admonishes you of the right and of the wrong; and you are hardening your consciences against Him when, all heedless of the admonition, you put it utterly away from you. He is crying to you by the prophets and the righteous men of old in that book which His Spirit hath dictated, and the words of which you have already learned to read—and it is your bounden duty to mind and to revere them; and you are just hardening yourselves in stoutheartedness against Him, when that word, which has been compared to a hammer breaking the rock in pieces, is yet unable to break that impregnable resistance wherewith so many obstinate sinners can stand out against all the denunciations that are written therein. It is, indeed, most woeful to think of the stern and uncomplying metal of resistance which the soul and the conscience of man are capable of taking on. Every month finds him a harder and a more resolute sinner than before. Every act of transgression takes so much away from the delicacy and the tenderness of his conscience. The wickedness he at one time trembled to think of, he anon can commit and glory in. His moral sensibilities at length sink into utter decay. The preaching of the word cannot move him—the death of acquaintances on every side of him cannot shake him out of his determined rebellion—the tolling of the funeral bell sends no compunction into his steeled and inflexible bosom—the warnings of Providence do not affect him—and nothing will prevail upon him to feel or to consider till his own selfishness be touched by the agonies of his mortal disease, and the terrors of his own impending dissolution;—and then, to crown the sad history of infatuated man, does it turn out, that as God cried unto him in the days of his youth, and he would not hear, so when he cries on his dying bed, I will not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.

Let me bring this whole lesson more specifically to bear upon you, by urging upon you three leading particulars of the divine testimony, of which God is now making frequent and open proclamation in your hearing, but which if you do not hear, He will shut His ear and His tenderness against you when the day of your necessity arrives: and the first particular which we may gather from every page of His book, and also from the intimate consciousness—each in his own bosom, is that we have sinned against Him, and are now under rightful sentence of condemnation. There is none righteous, no, not one—all have fallen short of God's commandment and God's glory. There is none who understandeth, and none who seeketh after Him. And cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of His law to do them. These are the declarations of all being criminal and all being accursed before God;—and they are uttered not for the sole purpose of terrifying you, but for the purpose of prevailing on you to flee to the place of escape and deliverance. It is not to torment you before the time that God tries to light up the agonies of fear and of remorse in your bosom, but it is that you may be concerned how to find refuge from that threatened torment. He wants you to tremble at the thought of hell, not to make you miserable even before the door of that awful place is shut upon you; but He desires to set you trembling, in order that you may be led to flee from this coming wrath, and to betake yourselves to the appointed way of deliverance therefrom. But how many, alas! there be in our world who persist in profoundest lethargy under the terror and the threatening of all these denunciations. How many persist in their wickedness, and steel their unregenerated bosoms against the wrath and the vengeance that are denounced thereupon! How many, I fear, even among you, my young friends, who live as lightly and as unconcernedly as if there were no judgment and no hell—you will not hear when we tell you of sin and of vengeance. Conscience may offer now and then the intimation that you are not in friendship with God, and not in a fit state for dying and entering into His presence; but the lesson is thrown aside,

and the guilt and the danger are forgotten, and among light-hearted companions you lose all sight of the coming eternity, and thus you do what the children of Israel before did; when God cried unto them they did not hear, and you will not hear when by His Bibles and His ministers, and the whispers of His Holy Spirit in your heart, He tries to fix and solemnize you by the thought, that in yourselves you are undone sinners, the blood of whose own souls will be required at your hands. And thus you may fare even as they did—you will at length be reduced to the helplessness of their sad misery, and then when death comes upon you, may you cry when it is too late. And so, as you will not hear God now when he crieth unto you, He may not hear you then, when you cry unto Him.

But there is another particular of the divine testimony that I must sound forth in your hearing—I have already said that there is a future day of wrath—but I now say that there is a present day of acceptance.

I have already said that you are sinners—but I now say that there is a Saviour for sinners. I have already said that you are under the curse of a violated law—but I now tell you of one who hath taken that curse upon Himself, who hath redeemed us from it by becoming a curse for us, who hung upon the tree for your offences, and there bore the whole weight of His Father's displeasure—drinking to the very dregs the cup of our expiation, and pouring forth His soul unto the death, that we may live through Him. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, of which proclamation is made every day from our Bibles, every week from our pulpits, every year from our solemn sacraments. God hath lifted up the cry of invitation unto all; and He now expostulates with us that we should return unto Him, and He bids us believe in Christ that we may be saved, and often does He tell us if we will only come unto Himself through the open door of Christ's mediatorship, He will forgive all and forget all. These are the cries of a Father after His wandering and disobedient children, for He does not want to lose them, but rather that they should turn unto Him and live. And yet, alas! how much are these cries of a Father's tenderness unheeded by a perverse and unthinking generation—what an insulting return does the Father of mercies meet from us, when all day long He stretches forth His hand to a rebellious and gainsaying people! Oh! it was a foul provocation to have broken His law; but how far more bitter the provocation is, when we turn a deaf ear to His gospel, and turn our back on His offers of reconciliation?—and this is done by all who lightly esteem Christ, by all who count the preaching of His cross to be foolishness, by all who, careless about sin, are equally careless about the sacrifice that has been made for it. Do you hear of Christ, and hear of Him without emotion, and without any desire after Him? Do the tidings of salvation fall heavily and unconcernedly upon your ears? Is it all like the sound of an unknown voice, without any power to touch or to awaken you? Then, indeed, you affront God in the tenderest part, you dishonour His Son, you make Himself a liar by refusing His testimony respecting Him, you reject the offer of salvation that hath been brought to your door, you say—We shall persist in our sins, and we care not for the Saviour. The cry of gospel entreaty is lifted up in your hearing now, and you will not listen to it; and the cry for gospel mercy may arise from you then, when on the eve of bidding adieu to the world, you cast about for the peace and the interest of your eternity—because you can do no better, because you cannot help it. Oh! cast not away your own souls; listen to the Saviour who now standeth without, and knocketh at the door of your hearts; kiss Him while He is in the way. He is willing now to enter into friendship with you, and to manage your cause, and to take upon Himself the whole burden of your interest and reconciliation with God; but He will not always strive—His wrath will at length begin to burn; and if you refuse him now, the day may soon overtake you when you will cry unto Him and He will not hear you.

But, lastly, God calleth unto all to forsake the evil of their ways and the

evil of their thoughts. He bids all to repent as well as to believe the gospel. He hath uttered this solemn denunciation—that unless we repent we perish. He makes us to understand that in turning to Christ we turn from our iniquities. He sounds this will and order of His imperatively in your hearing:—Break off your sins by righteousness.—Come out from among evil ways and evil acquaintances.—Burst asunder the entanglements and the enticements of vicious pleasure by which you are surrounded.—Be ye separate from sinners, and follow not a multitude to do evil. And to encourage you with the offers of strength and aid from above that you may be enabled to prosecute the work of repentance and to perfect it, He says, Turn unto me, and behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you. This is the cry that He now lifts in your hearing—and will you dare after this to continue in the bonds of companionship with the ungodly? Will you choose the despisers of God and of goodness for your intimates, and that merely because they live with you in the same street, or work with you under the same master? Will you thus expose your eternity at random to the evil influences of such acquaintances as you may happen to meet with in the world?

You are young, and you may perhaps be laying your account with many days on this side of death, and may think that it is time enough to be good—that it is time enough to think of heaven, and of preparation for that awful and terrifying death which still lies at so remote a distance away from you. But I call upon you to feel the urgency of the text. Young as you are, God is lifting up a cry of expostulation and entreaty even unto you: Suffer little children to come unto me, says the Saviour—and is not this a cry of invitation to the least and youngest of you all? Children, obey your parents in the Lord, says one of His apostles—and is not this a cry of authority lifted up in your hearing? Your being young does not prevent God from crying unto you; but if you will not listen—this, when you come to be old, may prevent Him from hearing when you cry unto Him. Oh! persist not, then, in this unconcern any longer. Open your hearts to the voice of Him that speaketh from heaven, and who, while grieved because of your sins, is yet waiting to be gracious. Harden your hearts no longer against Him, or they may at length become harder than the adamant. Think with yourselves, that if this evening I stand my ground against the cry which I have heard, then will I stand more firmly against another, and another, and another cry; and thus will your case be every day becoming worse, and your chance for heaven will every day become more desperate, and your contempt and carelessness about divine things will grow upon you from one day to another; and your whole life may be one continued resistance to the proclaimed grace of that God who is now plying you with messages of love, and entreating your return to the paths of peace and of pleasantness. Oh! hold out no longer, lest in return for His cry being unheard by you all your lives long, you will at length send forth a fearful and a piercing and an exceeding bitter cry when death stares you in the face, and the terrors of the coming hell draw near to your affrighted soul, and the cry be disregarded, and the gate of mercy be shut, and the Spirit have left you to the fruit of your own ways, and an everlasting seal be set on that fountain which is now flowing out so freely, and to which you are now invited, that you may wash out your sins in the blood of the Lamb. Return unto God, and He will return unto you.—Seek Him while He is near.—Call upon Him while He is to be found—He will receive you graciously.—He will love you freely if you will only go to Him now, and put yourself under the protection of His Son Jesus Christ, and under the bidding of Him as the Master whom you have chosen, and whom alone you are determined to serve.

SERMON XXIX.

*Farewell Discourse at Glasgow.**

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."—PSALMS CXXXVII. 5, 6.

THE exquisite pathos and beauty of this sacred composition gives it a high place even in the records of poetry. It is, indeed, one of its most precious effusions; and apart altogether from that which constitutes its highest recommendation to a spiritual man, there are about it touches of imagery and feeling that call forth a responding homage from the native sensibilities of every heart. The captive despondency—the dear yet drooping recollection of that more distant home—the fond and lofty aspirings of a patriotism which the ruthless hand of tyranny must only have riveted the more, and never could extinguish—these deeper agitations of the soul are so mellowed into softness, and the pensive and the picturesque are so mingled together in these accompaniments of the harp and the river, and the hanging willow upon its side, as to make this, even when regarded in the light of a Hebrew melody, the finest and most fascinating of them all.

Yet they are not the breathings either of a natural or a poetic tenderness, but those of grace and of the Spirit, wherewith at present we have immediately to do. This psalm, in fact, is mainly and essentially the utterance of religion. It is the complaint of men now bereaved of its solemnities and its services, and hurried into a Pagan land, where the worship of Israel was derided, and the God of Israel was unknown. They had both the griefs and the fears of nature; but the chief burden of their grief is, that torn from the companionships of piety, and left to the cruel mockery of profane and unfeeling barbarians, their spirits had lost that wonted aliment by which all grace and all godliness are upholden; and the chief burden of their fear was, lest, in the withering atmosphere of that ungainly and ungenial neighbourhood where they now breathed, this grace and this godliness should go into utter dissipation. There was little danger that they should ever lose the regards and the recollections of patriotism. There was little danger that even to the hour of death the scenes of late ancestral glory, and of their own happy boyhood, should not always recur as far the dearest to their imagination. There was a powerful guarantee in the universal laws and sensations of humanity, that when they looked back on the peace and gladness of younger days, every bosom should fetch its heavy sigh, and every eye should weep at the remembrance of them. There was no fear lest any of them should become apostates from the truth and the tenderness of nature; but there was another, a more fatal apostasy, on the brink of which these holy men of God felt that they were standing; and this psalm, we repeat, is the outpouring of souls firm in their purposes of religious integrity, yet fearful of falling away from it—eyeing with dismay the hazards of their exile from a priestly and a consecrated land, and summoning to their aid the high resolve, the solemn and appalling conjuration—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I forget the city of my God, let my right hand forget her cunning; and if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

And we mistake it, my brethren, if we think that to be translated into a condition for feelings and purposes that are kindred to these, we must be visited with a kindred calamity—that upon us also an invasion and an overthrow and a captivity must come—that we must be wrested from our Christian homes, and carried far into savage or idolatrous

* Preached at St. John's, Glasgow, on the second Sabbath in Nov. 1823.

retreats, where Sabbaths and sacraments and churches are unknown. That book, which was written for our admonition, on whom the latter ends of the world have come, however remote its historical narratives may be from any experience of ours, is replete all over with passages of direct and most familiar application to our daily affairs; and more particularly of this passage may it be affirmed, that there elapseth not one day of our lives in which the disciple of Jesus is not exposed to a transition as wide and as violent as from the land of Israel to the land of Babylon—in which, without one mile of locomotion, he does not traverse a moral and a spiritual distance as great as that which separated the mourners of our text from their beloved Jerusalem—in which he does not step, as it were, from one region to another, in the first of which he stood as at the gate of heaven, and in the second is exposed to all the withering secularities of the world.

The Christian who is much exercised in the discernment of his own spirit, knows that there is in it a constant gravitation away from God; and that, were it not for an upward and aspiring tendency, which grace hath imparted and grace alone can uphold, it would instantly lapse into earthliness. If he have intelligently marked the fluctuation that taketh place in his heart on the ever-shifting occasions of his history—if he have contrasted aright the sacredness of his family prayer, and in the ordinary managements of his family the utter oblivion of all sacredness—if he have kept a record of the elevation to which at times he hath been borne upwardly in church, and then how he flattened to a level with the dust when surrounded again with the urgencies of business—if he ever breathed of a heavenly communion on the mount of ordinances, and felt how soon the companionships of every-day life scattered it away—he will admit that in reference to the Jerusalem above he is one of an exiled species—a stranger and sojourner in a distant land. Conscious how habitually it is that the things of sacredness slip away from his remembrance, his aspirations toward them will be frequent, and the heed that he gives to them will be earnest. There will be at all times a fearfulness upon his spirit because of its infirmity, and yet, like that of the captive Israelites, a solemn and a strenuous purpose against it It is indeed a kindred struggle, and there will be a kindred sympathy. He feels the text to be his own, and he uses it as a combative weapon against the bias of his earthly nature. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

We have not time for all the generalities of doctrine and of remark which, under this text, we might most pertinently expatiate upon, and therefore hasten to the task of stimulating your own consciences to a faithful application of it. You may remember, my friends, the occasions of your history when a glow came upon your spirits that felt like a glow of sacredness, and you must remember how speedily it all evanished on your very first exposure to the atmosphere of this world's society. You may remember, when holding converse with some Christian author—with a venerable worthy, perhaps, of some former generation—with one of those mighty dead who still speaketh in some precious memorial that he hath left behind him of his own holy and heavenly contemplations—you may remember how he exercised the charm that could abstract you for one little hour from the frivolities of life, and pour into your mind the glory of those great elements among which he himself expatiated. But when leaving the closet, you must remember the descent as well as the elevation, and with what facility it was that you could step down to creep and grovel as before on the platform of ordinary men. You may remember a similar transition even in the converse that you have held with a living instructor—how pleasant to your ear was the chime of the morning bells that summoned you to his pulpit ministrations—how you caught a frame of sacredness from your very presence in the house of God—and how the lessons of piety came with a peculiar force upon your spirit, when, instead of being taken in by the eye from the pages of a

written composition, they took their direct conveyance into the bosom from the sympathies of a heart in unison with your own.

And we, moreover, fear of many that they must remember how a Sabbath of lofty feelings, and when they seemed to breathe in the pure and elevated serene of an upper region, how such a Sabbath has been followed up by a week of utter desecration—how, from the beginning to the end of it, all their senses were steeped in worldliness—and that, throughout their six days, nothing was left to signalize their history from that of others who make of the seventh a free and festive holiday. And that, if possible, I may have a still nearer appeal to your consciences, some of you may have the fresh remembrance of that which felt like the unction of heaven upon your souls in the sacrament that has just gone by, and yet, in the short and rapid interval between, have met enough to convince you, that so soon as loosened from the altitude to which it had gotten the soul sinks and gravitates again to the dust of its own kindred earthliness. These are but a few instances out of the many. They are only the signs and the specimens of a general law that operates at all times and throughout the whole extent of our degraded nature. They are the sad evidences of our banishment from heaven, of our disruption from God's unfallen family. They prove that there is an element within—an element of repugnance and of recoil from godliness—an accursed enmity in our spirits to the things of faith—a headlong tendency that weighs us down to that world of sense and of sight, among whose carnal delights and comfortable dwellings we could live forever, and gladly consent to an eternal separation from all the glories of the upper Paradise. It is this, my brethren, which constitutes one and all of us exiles from the city of the living God. It is a sense of this that ministers to every aspirant the humbling conviction of his woeful distance and deficiency therefrom. It is because of this that he mourns and is in heaviness; while in reference to the great majority, we fear, that though all the alternations which we have now set forth be fully experienced, no practical regret is experienced along with it. Any religion they have is caught in glimpses or in passing emotions; it comes round at the stated period, and makes way for other things which pass in busy succession through the circuits of their history; it has its insignificant corner in the whole system of their affairs. Meanwhile, life bustles onwards to its close; and after a procession of many feelings and many fugitive regards among which religion had its place with other things, are there many who pass with spirits wholly unrenewed into the presence of God, with persons wholly unsanctified to the awards of the judgment-seat.

You are not to imagine that religion is like to one term of the series, to one article in the great inventory of human life; nor, on the principle that there is a time and a season for everything, are you to exclude religion from its rightful ascendency over all the departments of human experience. You are not to view it as a chapter in your history, but rather as that which gives a quality and a style to the whole composition. You are not to confine it within the dimensions of a part, but to diffuse it as you would a colouring substance that leavens and impregnates the whole. It is very true that household engagements must be gone through. It is very true that business in all its manifold details must be attended to. It is very true that the cares of health and of daily bread and of a provision for your families are ever soliciting the regards of your spirit, and ever multiplying your avocations and anxieties. I freely concede that thus the life of man must be broken down into countless and ever-changing varieties; but I contend, that in religion there is an amalgamating power by which it closes and coalesces therewith, and stamps a reigning character upon them all—that an individual might peruse and ponder and give himself to busy penmanship for hours in his counting-house—that he might bustle his way through the activities and negotiations of a market—that he might relax his wearied faculties in the bosom of the domestic circle, and there listen with delighted ear to the prattle of infancy—that he might indulge in all the

gayeties of a benevolent heart, whether at home or in society—in a word, that he might pass from one scene and employment to another, and yet carry through them all the decided aspect and temper of a Christian. He might no more resign, by any of these transitions, the complexion of a spiritual man than the complexion of his face; all the while might this characteristic sit as visibly upon him as any other of the characteristics which nature or habit hath bestowed. Whatever a man's engagements, or however they may shift and fluctuate from one to another, there still cleaves to him his sanguine, or his phlegmatic, or his melancholy, or, in short, his constitutional temperament, whatever it may be. And so to the true disciple there should cleave upon all occasions his Christian temperament. The anointing that hath given it to him is an anointing that remaineth. It manifesteth itself not in some things only, but in all; for such is the high demand of the religion that you profess, to do all things to the glory of God, to do all things in the name of Jesus.

There are many hearts to which the word of God reaches no further than the surface, and like the seed which fell by the way-side, it is instantly taken away; and there are many more where it enters a little way within the surface, and there springeth up a rapid vegetation of sensibilities, and purposes, and vows, which having no root, like the seed that feel upon rocky ground, all sicken and decay under the withering exposures of this world. It is against the deceitfulness of such emotions as these that I would like to guard you—it is the evanescent pathos as disjoined from the operation and the habitual power that is so very apt to minister to your bosoms a most treacherous complacency—it is lest the quick and transitory feeling should pass in your imaginations for the sturdiness of enduring principle, that I am jealous over you, and I trust with a godly jealousy. I would have you warned, my brethren, that Christianity may be so rooted as to yield the love and delicate efflorescence which the first rude blast will destroy; and not be so rooted as to become the object of a steadfast remembrance and steadfast regard, and so as that the blossoms of promise may be succeeded by the fruits of righteousness. It is because of the flower without the fruit, that a morning of fair profession so often settles down into a manhood or an old age of inveterate worldliness—and that after a spring green with verdure and opening foliage, so many might apply the true and the tremendous saying, that the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved. You feel now—and I want to counteract the tide of your emotions by lifting up before your eyes the rough fruit of experience, and proclaiming how possible it is that you may forget afterwards. The delusions of our modern world are as hurtful and as hazardous to encounter as were the idolatries of the land of Babylon. Be forewarned and forearmed like the Israelites of my text—and be it your holy determination, as it was theirs, that the things of heaven shall never be forgotten. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I forget Mount Zion, and the city of the living God, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

I feel it most oppressively unpleasant to allude, however distantly, to myself—and on the moment of touching upon the borders of egotism, there spring up a thousand delicacies which are most difficult to manage, and which one is utterly at a loss how to dispose of. They have really cost me some thought; but I have at length resolved that when holding converse with fellow-sinners on the high matters of eternity, any feeling of the sort ought to be suspended—that it is my duty on the present occasion to school down the repugnance altogether; and when anything has to be spoken which substantially affects so deep and mighty a concern as the well-being of your souls, no scruple and no ceremony should be permitted to stand in its way. It is quite palpable then to you all, so indulgently have I been dealt with by my hearers, that from first to last I have had a goodly attendance; and it is a question which concerns not me more than it does

yourselves—what the peculiar magnetism is which can possibly account for it? I have had my own painful misgivings upon this subject—and more especially when I read that it is possible for man by his own wisdom and his own words to make Christ of none effect—that the treasure of saving truth is deposited in earthen vessels, and therefore many may be drawn to gaze on the painted devices, the curious singularities of the vessel, without seeking or caring for any spiritual treasure—that there may be a cadence in the song which pleaseth the ear, but which after the performance is over dieth away into oblivion, and leaveth not an impression of power or of permanency upon the heart—that the holy apostles preached not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and that in His doctrine there is a simplicity, every deviation from which might perhaps be chargeable on the waywardness of the preacher's own imagination. These are the thoughts which at times have involved me in a certain ambiguity that is hard to be resolved—and for which, after all, the best touch-stone is the practical state of your own souls, the character of your present habits, the course of your future history.

It is thus that I would leave it; and thus only can it be made palpable to the eye of mortal, whether a genuine unction from on high hath descended upon you—whether the interest you have heretofore taken in the ministrations of this pulpit be altogether of earthly origin—or whether, indeed, it be heaven-born—a fire from the sanctuary above, or a spark of man's kindling—a meteoric glare that passeth away, or that light of Scripture and of the spirit which shineth more and more along the track of your worldly pilgrimage, and will at length usher you into the unclouded glories of eternity. Had every mournful feeling of the captives of Babylon been analyzed, it would have been found of some that they wept from patriotism, and of others that they wept from piety. The expression was the same in all—yet few of them, we have reason to believe, were Zion's mourners—and thus of the delight that may be felt throughout the continuance of gospel services, and the disappointment at their close. There might be mere humanity, and nothing more, in all our tenderness—the regret which nature feels at the breaking up of an earthly fellowship—the shock that is ever experienced by friendly hearts when their wonted relation is dissolved. And cruel as it may seem thus to probe and to anatomize among these sensibilities that I myself have wounded—it is of truly religious importance to know, that in the workings of our mysterious nature, there may, on an occasion like the present, be a sorrow that hath nought of the spirit from above, there may be a grief which hath naught of godliness.

Be aware, then, my brethren, of those manifold treacheries to which the heart is liable, and seek for the plain and the practical evidences within you that you have indeed heard to the salvation of your souls. There is not one Christianity for the philosopher, and another for the peasant—there is not one spiritual repast served up for the cultivated and the classic few, and another for the homely and unlettered multitude. The garnishing may be different, and perhaps this is not wrong; but be assured that whether it is to the poor that the gospel is preached, or to the sons and daughters of refinement, the substance of every right and wholesome ministration is the same. And to ascertain whether you have tasted of the bread of life—whether you have imbibed the true essence of spiritual nourishment—I look not to the gathering host, and the eager competition, and the arrested audience, or to the glow and the sentiment and the tragic sensibility that passes speedily away. These will subside, and only what is sterling will remain; and a few little months will throw light upon the question, whether you have only heard with the hearing of the ear, or the word of God hath found its secure and abiding lodgment within you? And even now, there may be a something which conscience can discern—a recollection of self, and of the changes which self hath experienced—that might give the token if not the assurance of good unto the soul. Have you felt, or do you now feel, an unwonted sense upon your spirit of its now manifest ungodliness?

Hath your blindness to this been dissipated?—and now, adrift from the old security of nature, do you see what an outcast you are from holiness and heaven? Hath the unsettled controversy between you and God been a burden to your soul, and as it roamed in quest of deliverance, did the tidings fall with welcome upon your ear, that unto you a Saviour has been born? Can you listen without antipathy to that gospel message which tells of the peace speaking blood and the sanctifying Spirit, and can you now rest in the one—do you now pray for the other? Is the truth that Christ died for your sins, according to the Scriptures—is this the truth that hath the chiefest prominency in your regards, and the most habitual place in your remembrance? Is His name like ointment poured forth; and when you think of His work, even a propitiation for sin, do you feel it to be precious?

How stand you affected now in reference to the Bible?—doth that phraseology which was wont to offend, now come with a charm and a power upon your renovated taste? and do you now feel that dearer to your heart than all the splendours of human eloquence are the impressive simplicities of the gospel? In Scripture, even though alone, can you find the food that regales and satisfies? Do its memorable passages that often in other days sounded listlessly in your hearing—do they now come home with a sense that was before unfelt of their truth and importance; and as you travel through that record of heaven's embassies to the world, do you now gaze on beauties hitherto unrevealed, and greatly delight yourselves with treasures of wisdom that were at one time unnoticed and unknown? Have you now given up the festivities of riot and profaneness for the fellowships of piety—the thirst of this world's gain for the hope of the next world's glory—the pleasures of sin which are but for a season for the fruits of that righteousness which endureth forever?—these are the elements which enter into the Christianity of cottages, and if they be not the very elements which are fixed and realized upon yourselves, then you have no Christianity. These are the only legitimate triumphs of the pulpit; and apart from these, eloquence and argument and learning are but profanation. Oh, how paltry they will appear amid the solemn realities of the judgment-seat! and what a tremendous reckoning of guilt should it indeed be found that between a vaporing exhibition upon the one side, and an ecstasy of admiration upon the other, religion as a business—religion in sober earnest and as a practical object, has been entirely disregarded!

I have already stated that all those delicacies which stood in the way of any utterance that is important to be made, should give place for the time at least, and until that utterance is past. And on this principle I now throw aside for one moment a ceremonial that might else have obstructed the declaration which I now hasten to make, and which I deem to be even of Christian importance that you should hear. The pulpit ministrations under which many of you have now sat for upwards of eight years, have I trust been held by most of you as the ministrations of a man in earnest—that you at least recognized in them an expression and perhaps an honest sense of the paramount worth of the soul; and whatever their manifold imperfections may have been, (and sure I am that they are without reckoning,) they have often borne utterance in your hearing to the supremacy of eternal things when put by the side of this world's gayest and even most glorious fascinations. Now to many an unpractised eye the movement that I now make might seem in a most painful and puzzling incongruity with all this; a transition from the pulpit to the academic chair might be pronounced but a dereliction of sacredness for science—of religion and its holy services for the pomp and the pride and the heathenism of philosophy. When such a charge is preferred in the spirit of calumny, it is not worthy of a moment's attention; but when it cometh as the complaint of humble but wounded piety—when worth and charity and Christian tenderness have been known to weep over it as a sore desecration—when a shock has been given thereby to faithful and to feeling souls, and something like a

scandal is apprehended to that cause which is dearest to their bosoms from the desertion of one whom they had ranked among the most zealous of its advocates—when they are sensibilities like these with which we have to deal—the sorrows of honest affection and offended principle—it were barbarous indeed not to venerate the sanctity of such a grief, or to withhold any avowal that might satisfy and soothe it.

There is no time, nor do I think this a place for argument; and all therefore which I can at present do to reassure the conviction that has been in some degree unsettled is to make averment in your hearing—and I do it as in the presence of God, and from the depths of my own conscious sincerity, that on retiring from the direct business of the Church, I still regard that Church as the most glorious instrument for the moral and spiritual regeneration of our land—that with this our Zion are linked all my fondest associations, whether of patriotism or of piety—that as holy men of old took pleasure in the stones of Jerusalem, and favoured the very dust thereof, so dear to my recollection is every related thing which calls to mind the business of congregations and parishes, that, even apart from the high thought of each solemn assembly being an assembly of immortals, there is naught on earth which has such an impress of moral loveliness to my eye as its groups of decent and devout worshippers, and naught that falls with sweeter cadence upon my ear than the voice of their melting psalmody. But this is the mere poetry of religion, and these but the good and the graceful accompaniments that attend the exhibition of it in time. The pith and sterling of its excellence lies in its bearing upon eternity; the elements wherewith it is mainly conversant are the undying interests of the soul, the sin by which it is tainted, the Saviour by whom it is restored, the hell to which by nature it is so fast hastening, the heaven for which by grace it is invested with all the meet and necessary endowments. These are the dread and the solemn realities wherewith a minister of the everlasting gospel has to do, and when put by the side of these all the glories of human science vanish into the frivolities of childhood. This is true Christian arithmetic. In all the calculations of usefulness this is the principle that should never be overlooked—nor, with humility be it spoken, do I think that I have been left to overlook or to err in the application of it. From one of the thousand streams in our Establishment—a deep and a copious one, it must be admitted, but still a stream—a way hath been opened up to one of its emanating fountain-heads. From the vocation of labouring as one of the many teachers or prophets in our Church, I now enter upon the vocation of labouring in a school of the prophets. From the business of directly working the machine, I have been recalled to the business of a guidance and a guardianship over its elementary principles—or, in a manner, of feeding and regulating the fire that actuates its movements. From the deep exhaustion—not incurred at the home-walk of my parochial managements, for at all times was there a charm and a tranquillity in these—but from the deep exhaustion of hurry and fatigue and manifold distractions from without, have my footsteps been lured into a most congenial resting-place, among whose academic bowers Rutherford and Halyburton spent the evening of their days, and amid whose venerable ruins their bodies now sleep until the resurrection of the just. Should those high and heavenly themes on which they expatiated through life, and which shed a glory over their death-beds, ever cease to be dear unto my bosom—should the glare of this world's philosophy ever seduce me from the wisdom and simplicity of the faith—should Jesus Christ and Him crucified not be the end of all my labours in expounding the law of righteousness—then let the fearful judgments of heaven blight and overcast the faculties that I thus have prostituted. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I forget thee, O thou Church and city of my God, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

I have spoken to you, my brethren, in much feebleness, and in the present state of my feelings have been wholly unable to do justice to this day's argu

ment. There are topics on which I dare hardly so much as enter, and on which, perhaps instead of adventuring any utterance in this place, it were more safe to restrain the struggling feelings, and consign them all back to those silent depositories of the heart where gratitude or good-will to you all shall ever be indelibly engraven.

Yet let me hurry over this dangerous course, or at least attempt how much I can overtake of it in a few moments of rapid articulation. I will never forget that it is your princely beneficence which has carried me forward in the enterprise of covering the parish with those institutions both of scholarship and of piety that have done most to grace and to dignify the people of our beloved land. I will never forget the labours of that devoted band to whose union and whose perseverance I still look for even greater services than they have ever yet rendered in the cause of Christian philanthropy. I never will forget the unexcepted welcome and kindness of my parochial families among whom the cause that to the superficial eye looks unpopular and austere, hath now found its conclusive establishment. I never will forget the indulgence and the friendly regards of this congregation; and I beg to assure each and all of them that if a cold and ungenial apathy, whether of look or of manner, was all the return they ever could obtain for their demonstrations of Christian affection towards myself, it was not because I had not the conviction of that manifold good-will which was on every side of me, but that moving in a wide and busy sphere and hurried in the course of a few minutes from one act of intercourse to another with more than a thousand of my fellows my jaded and overborne feelings could not keep pace with it. There are hundreds, and hundreds more, whom in person I could not overtake but whom, in the hours of cool and leisurely reflection, I shall know how to appreciate. And when I gaze on that quarter—the richest to me of all the wide horizon in the treasures of cordiality and grateful remembrance—then sweeter than to the eye are those tints of loveliness which the western sun stretches in golden clouds above it, will be the thought of all the worth, and the tenderness and the noble generosity that are there. Oh! I never can forget the city of so many Christian and kind-hearted men. I never will forget the countenance I have gotten from its upright and patriotic citizens.

Let me entreat as one parting memorial, that you will treasure up the summary of my own deeply felt experience. Martin Luther hath pronounced it to be the article of a standing or a falling Church, even that of justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ, or that the Church will stand which keeps to Christ and that the Church will fall by which he is forgotten. The same truth would I record in the hearing of you all—not in the shape of a mere catechetical dogma—not as one of the catechetical orthodox doctrines—not as an assumption laid upon the consciences of men by the hand of human intolerance—not, in one word, with any of these accompaniments which serve to revolt many a generous spirit, and to invest this precious, this venerable truth, with the air of a severe and scholastic controversy. I should like it to drop as balm on every weary and agitated spirit, and to assure him that if in time past he hath laboured to establish a righteousness of his own, and that still his conscience warns him that he is as far both from rest and from spiritual affection as before, then let him wrap himself round in the garment of that ready-made righteousness which Christ hath brought in, and all will be light and love and liberty. This indeed is the power of God and the wisdom of God to salvation. This has a regenerating charm, not merely to tranquillize the sinner's fears but to turn him into the ways of new obedience. The great apostle was determined to know nothing else among his people but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and this, not to darken the ample field of revelation, and leave nothing to the eye of the beholder but one naked and solitary apex but to place him on a summit whence he may descry the whole richness and variety of the prospect that is

spread out before him. Let me entreat your frequent, your earnest perusal, accompanied with prayer, of the fifth chapter of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where the hope of immortality and the gift of the Spirit, and the walk of faith, and the acceptance of the life that bears throughout all its history a reference to the judgment-seat, and the principle of Christian obedience, and the mighty change implied in Christian regeneration, and the beseeching tenderness of God, and his free overtures of reconciliation to all,—where these are found to mingle together, not, it is true, according to the forms of an artificial system, but in the very order of God's own Spirit. Oh! to learn to suspend the whole on this master proposition, that He hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

SERMON XXX.

*Fury Not in God.**

"Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me."—ISAIAH vii. 3—5.

THERE are three distinct lessons in this text. The first, that fury is not in God: the second, that He does not want to glorify Himself by the death of sinners—"Who would set the thorns and briers against me in battle?" the third, the invitation—"Take hold of my strength, that you may make peace with me; and you shall make peace with me."

I. First, then, Fury is not in God. But how can this be? is not fury one manifestation of His essential attributes? do we not repeatedly read of His fury—of Jerusalem being full of the fury of the Lord—of God casting the fury of His wrath upon the world—of Him rendering His anger upon His enemies with fury—of him accomplishing His fury upon Zion—of Him causing His fury to rest on the bloody and devoted city? We are not therefore to think that fury is banished altogether from God's administration. There are times and occasions when this fury is discharged upon the objects of it; and there must be other times and other occasions when there is no fury in Him. Now, what is the occasion upon which He disclaims all fury in our text? He is inviting men to reconciliation; He is calling upon them to make peace; and He is assuring them, that if they will only take hold of His strength, they shall make peace with Him. In the preceding verses He speaks of a vineyard; and in the act of inviting people to lay hold of His strength, He is in fact inviting those who are without the limits of the vineyard to enter in. Fury will be discharged on those who reject the invitation. But we cannot say that there is any exercise of fury in God at the

* A few years ago, Dr. Chalmers looked over, and carefully assorted and classified those of his unpublished pulpit preparations which were in short hand, a large mass of which is still existing. Out of these he selected a few which he extended into long hand, four of which, viz., Sermons xx., xxi., xxii., xxviii., have in the present volume been presented to the reader. The sermon which follows was one of these, but as it was more than simply re-written, as it was remoulded in the transcription, and became Dr. Chalmers' most favourite sermon in later years, I have thought it right to place it as belonging to the period which succeeded the Glasgow ministry. It was written originally in two parts, and preached at Kilmany on October 2, and October 9, 1814. Even then more than an ordinary value appears to have been attached to it by its author, as he repeated the delivery of both parts at Kilmany on July 2, 1815, the last Sabbath but one before leaving that parish. He was much interested himself in discovering it and re-employing it many years after he left Glasgow—after an interval, as he himself calculated, of about twenty years. How very frequently he used it after its recovery, all who of late years have had frequent opportunities of hearing him preach, will remember. He chose it as the sermon to be delivered, when on a very memorable Sabbath he preached to a large assemblage in the lawn before Banchory House, on the 10th September, 1843; and also when, to a smaller audience, but in a locality which deeply interested him, he preached in the Free Church by St. Mary's Loch, in April, 1846.

time of giving the invitation. There is the most visible and direct contrary. There is a longing desire after you. There is a wish to save you from that day in which the fury of a rejected Saviour will be spread abroad over all who have despised Him. The tone of invitation is not a tone of anger—it is a tone of tenderness. The look which accompanies the invitation is not a look of wrath—it is a look of affection. There may be a time, there may be an occasion when the fury of God will be put forth on the men who have held out against Him, and turned them away in infidelity and contempt from His beseeching voice; but at the time that He is lifting this voice—at the time that He is sending messengers over the face of the earth to circulate it among the habitations of men—at the time particularly among ourselves, when in our own place and our own day Bibles are within the reach of every family, and ministers in every pulpit are sounding forth the overtures of the gospel throughout the land—surely at such a time and upon such an occasion, it may well be said of God to all who are now seeking His face and favour, that there is no fury in Him.

It is just as in the parable of the marriage feast: many rejected the invitation which the king gave to it—for which he was wroth with them, and sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burned up their city. On that occasion there was fury in the king, and on the like occasion will there be fury in God. But well can He say at the time when He is now giving the invitation—there is no fury in me. There is kindness—a desire for peace and friendship—a longing earnestness to make up the quarrel which now subsists between the Lawgiver in heaven, and His yet impenitent and unreconciled creatures.

This very process was all gone through at and before the destruction of Jerusalem. It rejected the warnings and invitations of the Saviour, and at length experienced His fury. But there was no fury at the time of His giving the invitations. The tone of our Saviour's voice when He uttered—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," was not the tone of a vindictive and irritated fury. There was compassion in it—a warning and pleading earnestness that they would mind the things which belong to their peace; and at that time when He would willingly have gathered them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—then may it well be said that there was no fury in the Son of God, no fury in God.

Let us make the application to ourselves in the present day. On the last day there will be a tremendous discharge of fury. That wrath which sinners are now doing so much to treasure up will all be poured forth on them. The season of God's mercy will then have come to an end; and after the sound of the last trumpet, there will never more be heard the sounding call of reconciliation. Oh, my brethren, that God who is grieved and who is angry with sinners every day, will in the last day pour it all forth in one mighty torrent on the heads of the impenitent. It is now gathering and accumulating in a store-house of vengeance; and at the awful point in the successive history of nature and providence, when time shall be no more, will the door of this store-house be opened, that the fury of the Lord may break loose upon the guilty, and accomplish upon them the weight and the terror of all his threatenings.

You misunderstand the text, then, my brethren, if you infer from it that fury has no place in the history or methods of God's administration. It has its time and its occasion—and the very greatest display of it is yet to come, when the earth shall be burned up, and the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. It makes one shudder seriously to think that there may be some here present whom this devouring torrent of wrath shall sweep away; some here present who will be drawn into the whirl of

destruction, and forced to take their descending way through the mouth of that pit where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; some here present who so far from experiencing in their own persons that there is no fury in God will find that throughout the dreary extent of one hopeless and endless and unmitigated eternity, it is the only attribute of His they have to do with. But hear me, hear me ere you have taken your bed in hell; hear me, ere that prison door be shut upon you which is never never again to be opened! hear me, hear me ere the great day of the revelation of God's wrath comes round, and there shall be a total breaking up of that system of things which looks at present so stable and so unalterable! On that awful day I might not be able to take up the text and say—that there is no fury in God. But, oh! hear me, for your lives hear me—on this day I can say it. From the place where I now stand I can throw abroad amongst you the wide announcement—that there is no fury in God; and there is not one of you into whose heart this announcement may not enter, and welcome will you be to strike with your beseeching God a league of peace and of friendship that shall never be broken asunder. Surely when I am busy at my delegated employment of holding out the language of entreaty, and of sounding in your ears the tidings of gladness, and of inviting you to enter into the vineyard of God—surely at the time when the messenger of the gospel is thus executing the commission wherewith he is charged and warranted, he may well say—that there is no fury in God. Surely at the time when the Son of God is inviting you to kiss Him and to enter into reconciliation, there is neither the feeling nor the exercise of fury. It is only if you refuse, and if you persist in refusing, and if you suffer all these calls and entreaties to be lost upon you—it is only then that God will execute His fury, and put forth the power of His anger. And therefore He says to us, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Such, then, is the interesting point of time at which you stand. There is no fury in God at the very time that He is inviting you to flee from it. He is sending forth no blasting influence upon the fig-tree even though hitherto it had borne no fruit, and been a mere cumberer of the ground, when He says we shall let it alone for another year, and dig it, and dress it, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then let it be afterwards cut down. Now my brethren, you are all in the situation of this fig-tree; you are for the present let alone; God has purposes of kindness towards every one of you; and as one of His ministers I can now say to you all—that there is no fury in Him. Now when the spiritual husbandman is trying to soften your hearts he is warranted to make a full use of the argument of my text—that there is no fury in God. Now that the ambassador of Christ is plying you with the offers of grace and of strength to renew and to make you fruitful, he is surely charged with matter of far different import from wrath and threatening and vengeance. Oh! let not all this spiritual husbandry turn out to be unavailing; let not the offer be made now, and no fruit appear afterwards; let not yours be the fate of the barren and unfruitful fig-tree. The day of the fury of the Lord is approaching. The burning up of this earth and the passing away of these heavens is an event in the history of God's administration to which we are continually drawing nearer; and on that day when the whole of universal nature shall be turned into a heap of ruins, and we shall see the gleam of a mighty conflagration, and shall hear the noise of the frame-work of creation rending into fragments, and a cry shall be raised from a despairing multitude out of the men of all generations, who have just awoke from their resting-places—and amid all the bustle and consternation that is going on below, such a sight shall be witnessed from the canopy of heaven as will spread silence over the face of the world, and fix and solemnize every individual of its incumbent population. Oh, my brethren, let us not think that on that day when the Judge is to appear charged with the mighty object of vindicating before men and angels the truth and the majesty of God—that the fury of God will not then

appear in bright and burning manifestation. But what I have to tell you on this day, is, that fury is not in God—that now is the time of those things which belong to the peace of our eternity; and that if you will only hear on this the day of your merciful visitation, you will be borne off in safety from all those horrors of dissolving nature, and amid the wild war and frenzy of its reeling elements, will be carried by the arms of love to a place of security and everlasting triumph.

II. This brings us to the second head of discourse—God is not wanting to glorify Himself by the death of sinners—"Who would set the thorns and the briers against me in battle?" The wicked and the righteous are often represented in Scripture by figures taken from the vegetable world. The saved and sanctified are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified. The godly man is said to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season. The judgment which cometh upon a man is compared to an ax laid to the root of a tree. A tree is said to be known by its fruits; and as a proof that the kind of character of men is specified by the kind of tree in the woods, we read that of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of the bramble-bush gather they grapes. You will observe that the thorn is one of the kinds instanced in the text, and when God says, I would go through them, I would burn them together, He speaks of the destruction which cometh on all who remain in the state of thorns and briers; and this agrees with what we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, "That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Thorns and briers are in other places still more directly employed to signify the enemies of God. "And the light of Israel shall be for a fire," says one of the prophets, "and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall burn and devour His thorns and His briers in one day." Therefore, when God says in the text, "Who would set the thorns and the briers against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together," He speaks of the ease wherewith He could accomplish His wrath upon His enemies. They would perish before Him like the moth. They could not stand the lifting up of the red right arm of the displeasure of Almighty God. Why set up, then, a contest so unequal as this? Why put the wicked in battle array against Him who could go through them and devour them in an instant by the breath of His fury? God is saying in the text that this is not what He is wanting. He does not want to set Himself forth as an enemy, or as a strong man armed against them for the battle—it is a battle He is not at all disposed to enter into. The glory He would achieve by a victory over a host so feeble, is not a glory that His heart is at all set upon. Oh, no! ye children of men, He has no pleasure in your death; He is not seeking to magnify Himself by the destruction of so paltry a foe; He could devour you in a moment; He could burn you up like stubble; and you mistake it if you think that renown on so poor a field of contest is a renown that He is at all aspiring after. Who would set the grasshoppers in battle array against the giants? Who would set thorns and briers in battle array against God? This is not what He wants: He would rather something else. Be assured, He would rather you were to turn, and to live, and to come into His vineyard, and submit to the regenerating power of His spiritual husbandry, and be changed from the nature of an accursed plant to a tree of righteousness. In the language of the next verse, He would rather that this enemy of His, not yet at peace with Him, and who may therefore be likened to a brier or a thorn—He would rather than he remained so that he should take hold of God's strength, that he may make peace with Him—and as the fruit of his so doing, he shall make peace with Him.

Now tell me if this do not open up a most wonderful and a most inviting view of God? It is the real attitude in which He puts Himself forth to us in the gospel of His Son. He there says, in the hearing of all to whom the word of this salvation is sent, "Why will ye

die?" It is true that by your death He could manifest the dignity of His Godhead; He could make known the power of His wrath; He could spread the awe of His truth and His majesty over the whole territory of His government and send forth to its uttermost limits the glories of His strength and His immutable sovereignty. But He does not want to magnify Himself over you in this way; He has no ambition whatever after the renown of such a victory, over such weak and insignificant enemies. Their resistance were no trial whatever to His strength or to His greatness. There is nothing in the destruction of creatures so weak that can at all bring Him any distinction, or throw any aggrandizement around Him. And so in Scripture everywhere do we see Him pleading and protesting with you that He does not want to signalize Himself upon the ruin of any, but would rather that they should turn and be saved.

And now, my brethren, what remains for you to do? God is willing to save you: are you willing to be saved? The way is set before you most patiently and clearly in the Bible—nay, the very text, brief as it is, points out to you the way, as I shall endeavour to explain and set before you in the third head of discourse. But meanwhile, and all the better to secure a hearing from you, let me ask you to lay it upon your consciences, whether you are in a state that will do for you to die in. If not, then I beseech you to think how certainly death will, and how speedily it may, come upon the likeliest of you all. The very youngest among you know very well, that if not cut off previously—which is a very possible thing—then manhood will come, and old age will come, and the dying bed will come, and the very last look you shall ever cast on your acquaintances will come, and the agony of the parting breath will come, and the time when you are stretched a lifeless corpse before the eyes of weeping relatives will come, and the coffin that is to inclose you will come, and that hour when the company assemble to carry you to the churchyard will come, and that minute when you are put into the grave will come, and the throwing in of the loose earth into the narrow house where you are laid, and the spreading of the green sod over it—all, all will come on every living creature who now hears me; and in a few little years the minister who now speaks, and the people who now listen, will be carried to their long homes, and make room for another generation. Now, all this, you know, must and will happen—your common sense and common experience serve to convince you of it. Perhaps it may have been little thought of in the days of careless and thoughtless and thankless unconcern which you have spent hitherto; but I call upon you to think of it now, to lay it seriously to heart, and no longer to trifle and delay when the high matters of death and judgment and eternity are thus set so evidently before you. And the tidings wherewith I am charged—and the blood lieth upon your own head and not upon mine, if you will not listen to them—the object of my coming amongst you, is to let you know what more things are to come; it is to carry you beyond the regions of sight and of sense to the regions of faith, and to assure you, in the name of Him who cannot lie, that as sure as the hour of laying the body in the grave comes, so surely will also come the hour of the spirit returning to the God who gave it. Yes, and the day of final reckoning will come, and the appearance of the Son of God in heaven, and His mighty angels around Him, will come, and the opening of the books will come, and the standing of the men of all generations before the judgment-seat will come, and the solemn passing of that sentence which is to fix you for eternity will come. Yes, and if you refuse to be reconciled in the name of Christ, now that He is beseeching you to be so, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Saviour would have you, I must tell you what that sentence is to be—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

There is a way of escape from the fury of this tremendous storm. There is a pathway of egress from the state of condemnation to the state of acceptance.

There is a method pointed out in Scripture by which we who by nature are the children of wrath, may come to be at peace with God. Let all ears be open then to our explanation of this way as we bid you in the language of our text take hold of God's strength, that you may make peace with Him, and which if you do, you shall make peace with Him.

III. Read now the fifth verse:—"Or let him take hold of my strength. that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." *Or* here is the same with *rather*. Rather than that what is spoken of in the fourth verse should fall upon you—rather than that I should engage in battle with mine enemies—rather than that a result so melancholy to them should take place, as my going through them and burning them together—rather than that all this should happen, I would greatly prefer that they took hold of my strength in order to make peace with me; and I promise, as the sure effect of this proceeding, that they shall make peace with me. We have not far to seek for what is meant by this strength, for Isaiah himself speaks (ch. xxxiii. 6) of the strength of salvation. It is not your destruction but your salvation that God wants to put forth His strength in. There has strength been already put forth in the deliverance of a guilty world—the very strength which He wants you to lay hold of. He will be glorified in the destruction of the sinner, but He would like better to be glorified by his salvation. To destroy you is to do no more than to set fire to briers and thorns, and to consume them; but to save you—this is indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God—this is the mighty achievement which angels desire to look into—this is the enterprise upon which a mighty Captain embarked all the energy that belonged to Him, and travelled in the greatness of His strength until that He accomplished it; and now that it is accomplished, God would much rather be glorified in the salvation of His saints, than glorified in the destruction of sinners. (2 Thess. i. 7, 10.) God will show His wrath, and make His power known in the destruction of the sinner. But it is a more glorious work of power to redeem that sinner. and this He engages to do for you if you will take hold of His strength. He would greatly prefer this way of making His power known. He does not want to enter into battle with you, or to consume you like stubble by the breath of His indignation. No; He wants to transform sinners into saints: He wants to transform vessels of wrath into vessels of mercy, and to make known the riches of His glory on those whom He had afore prepared unto glory. There is a strength put forth in the destruction of the sinner. but there is also a strength put forth in the salvation of a sinner, and this is the strength which He wants you to lay hold of in my text—this is the strength by the display of which He would prefer being glorified. He would rather decline entering into a contest with you sinners; for to gain a victory over you would be no more to Him than to fight with the briers and the thorns, and to consume them. But from enemies to make friends of you; from the children of wrath to transform you into the children of adoption; from the state of guilt to accomplish such a mighty and a wonderful change upon you, as to put you into the state of justification; from the servants of sin to make you in the day of His power the willing servants of God; to chase away from your faculties the darkness of nature, and to make all light and comfort around you; to turn you from a slave of sense. and to invest with all their rightful ascendency over your affections the things of eternity; to pull down the strongholds of corruption within you, and raise him who was spiritually dead to a life of new obedience;—this is the victory over you which God aspires after. It is not your destruction or your death that He delights in. or that He wants to be glorified by—it is your thorough and complete salvation from the punishment of sin, and the power of sin, on which He is desirous of exalting the glory of His strength, and this is the strength which he calls you to take hold upon.

Let me now, in what remains. first say a few things more upon this strength—the strength of salvation which is spo

ken of in the text—and then state very briefly what it is to lay hold of it.

And first we read of a mighty strength that had to be put forth in the work of a sinner's justification. You know that all men are sinners, and so all are under the righteous condemnation of God. How, in the name of all that is difficult and wonderful, can these sinners ever get this condemnation removed from them? By what new and unheard of process can the guilty before God ever again become justified in His sight? How from that throne, of which it is said that judgment and justice are the habitation, can the sentence of acquittal ever be heard on the children of iniquity? How can God's honour be kept entire in the sight of angels, if we men who have repeatedly mocked Him and insulted Him, and made our own wish and our own way take the precedency of His high and solemn requirements—if we, with all this contempt of the Lawgiver expressed in our lives, and all this character of rebellion against Him written upon our foreheads, shall be admitted to a place of distinction in heaven—and that too after God has committed Himself in the hearing of angels—after He had given us a law by the disposition of angels, and we had not kept it—and after He had said how the wicked shall not go unpunished, but that cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of God's law to do them? But what is more, it was not merely the good and the obedient angels who knew our rebellion—the malignant and fallen angels not only knew it, but they devised and they prompted it. And how, I would ask, can God keep the awful majesty of His truth and justice entire in the sight of His adversaries, if Satan and the angels of wickedness along with him shall have it in their power to say—we prevailed on man to insult Him by sin, and have compelled God to put up with the affront, and to connive at it?

Now, just in proportion to the weight and magnitude of the obstacle was the greatness of that strength which the Saviour put forth in the mighty work of moving it away. We have no adequate conception upon this matter, and must just take our lesson from revelation about it;—and whether we take the prophecies which foretold the work of our Redeemer, or the history which relates it, or the doctrine which expatiates on its worth and its efficacy—all go to establish that there was the operation of a power—that there was the severity of a conflict—that there was the high emprise of an arduous and mighty warfare—that there were all the throes and all the exertions of a struggling and at length a prevailing energy in the execution of that work which our Saviour had to do—that He had a barrier to surmount, and that, too, with the cries and the pains and the sorrows of heavy suffering and labour—that a mighty obstacle lay before Him, and He, in the business of removing it, had to travel in all the greatness of the faculties which belonged to Him—that there was a burden laid upon His shoulders, which by no one else but the Prince of Peace could have been borne—that there was a task put into His hand which none but he could fulfil. And had the question ever been reasoned throughout the hosts of paradise, Who can so bend the unchangeable attributes of God, who can give them a shift so wonderful, that the sinners who have insulted Him may be taken into forgiveness, and His honour be kept untainted and entire?—there is not one of the mighty throng who would not have shrunk from an enterprise so lofty. There is not one of them who could at once magnify the law and release man from its violated sanctions. There is not one of them who could turn its threatening away from us, and at the same time give to the truth and the justice of God their brightest manifestation. There is not one of them who could unravel the mystery of our redemption through all the difficulties which beset and which surround it. There is not one of them who, by the strength of his arm, could have obtained the conquest over these difficulties. And however little we may enter into the elements of this weighty speculation, let us forget not that the question was not merely between God and man—it was between God and all the creatures He had formed. They

saw the dilemma; they felt how deeply it involved the character of the Deity; they perceived its every bearing on the majesty of His attributes, and on the stability of the government that was upheld by Him. With them it was a matter of deep and most substantial interest; and when the Eternal Son stepped forward to carry the undertaking to its end, the feeling amongst them all was that a battle behooved to be fought, and that the strength of this mighty Captain of our salvation was alone equal to the achievement of the victory.

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."

The way of redemption has been found out in the unsearchable riches of divine wisdom, and Christ is called the wisdom of God. But the same Christ is also called the power of God. In the mighty work of redemption He put forth a strength, and it is that strength that we are called to take hold upon. There was a wonderful strength in bearing the wrath which would have fallen on the millions and millions more of a guilty world. There was a strength which bore Him up under the agonies of the garden. There was a strength which supported Him under the hidings of His Father's countenance. There was a strength which upheld Him in the dark hour of the travail of His soul, and which one might think had well-nigh given way when He called out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" There was a strength which carried Him in triumph through the contest over Satan when he buffeted Him with his temptations; and a strength far greater than we know of in that mysterious struggle which He held with the powers of darkness, when Satan fell like lightning from heaven, and the Captain of our salvation spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, and triumphed over them. There was a strength in overcoming all the mighty difficulties which lay in the way between the sinner and God, in unbarring the gates of acceptance to a guilty world, in bringing truth and mercy to meet, and righteousness and peace to enter into fellowship—so that God might be just, while He is the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

So much for the strength which is put forth in the work of man's redemption. But there is also a strength put forth in the work of man's regeneration. Christ hath not only done a great work for us in making good our reconciliation with God—He further does a great work in us when He makes us like unto God. But I have not time to dwell upon this last topic, and must content myself with referring you to the following Scriptures—Eph. i. 19; ii. 10; Phil. iv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; John xv. 5. The power which raised Jesus from the dead is the power which raises us from our death in trespasses and sins. The power that was put forth on creation is the power that makes us new creatures in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Neither have I time to make out a full demonstration of what is meant by laying hold of that strength. When you apply to a friend for some service, some relief from distress or difficulty, you may be said to lay hold of him; and when you place firm reliance both on his ability and willingness to do the service, you may well say that your hold is upon your friend—an expression which becomes all the more appropriate should he promise to do the needful good office, in which case your hold is not upon his power only, but upon his faithfulness. And it is even so with

the promises of God in Christ Jesus—you have both a power and a promise to take hold of. If you believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him, and if you believe the honesty of His invitation to all who are weary and heavy-laden, that they might come unto Him and have rest unto their souls, thus judging Him to be faithful who has promised, then indeed will you lay hold of Christ as the power of God unto salvation, and according to the faith which has thus led you to fix upon the Saviour so will it be done unto you. To continue in this faith is in the language of Scripture to hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end. Cast not away this confidence which hath great recompense of reward; or if you have not yet begun to place this confidence in the assurances of the gospel, lay hold of them now—they are addressed to each and to all of you. It is not a vague generality of which I am speaking. Let every man amongst you take up with Christ, and trust in Him for yourself.

I am well aware that unless the Spirit reveal to you, all I have said about Him will fall fruitless upon your ears, and your hearts will remain as cold and as heavy and as alienated as ever. Faith is His gift, and it is not of ourselves. But the minister is at his post when he puts the truth before you; and you are at your post when you hearken diligently, and have a prayerful spirit of dependence on the Giver of all wisdom—that He will bless the word spoken, and make it reach your souls in the form of a salutary and convincing application. And it is indeed wonderful—it is passing wonderful, that there should be about us such an ungenerous suspicion of our Father who is in heaven. It cannot be sufficiently wondered at that all the ways in which He sets Himself forth to us should have so feeble an influence in the way of cheering us on to a more delighted confidence. How shall we account for it—that the barrier of unbelief should stand so obstinately firm in spite of every attempt and every remonstrance—that the straitening should still continue—not the straitening of God toward us, for He has said everything to woo us to put our trust in Him—but the straitening of us towards God, whereby, in the face of His every kind and exhilarating declaration, we persist in being cold and distant and afraid of Him.

I know not, my brethren, in how far I may have succeeded, as an humble and unworthy instrument, in drawing aside the veil which darkens the face of Him who sitteth on the throne. But oh, how imposing is the attitude, and how altogether affecting is the argument with which He comes forward to us in the text of this day! It is not so much His saying that there is no fury in Him—this He often tells us in other passages of Scripture; but the striking peculiarity of the words now submitted to us is the way in which He would convince us how little interest He can have in our destruction, and how far it is from His thoughts to aspire after the glory of such an achievement, as if He had said—it would be nothing to me to consume you all by the breath of my indignation—it would throw no illustration over me to sweep away the whole strength of that rebellion which you have mustered up against me—it would make no more to my glory than if I went through the thorns and briers and burned them before me. This is not the battle I want to engage in—this is not the victory by which I seek to signalize myself; and you mistake me—you mistake me, ye feeble children of men, if you think that I aspire after anything else with any one of you than that you should be prevailed on to come into my vineyard, and lay hold of my strength, and seek to make peace with me, and you shall make peace with me. The victory that my heart is set upon is not a victory over your persons—that is a victory that will easily be gotten in the great day of final reckoning over all who have refused my overtures, and would none of my reproof, and have turned them away from my beseeching offers of reconciliation.

In that great day of the power of mine anger it will be seen how easy it is to accomplish such a victory as this—how rapidly the fire of my conflagration

will involve the rebels who have opposed me in that devouring flame from which they never. never can be extricated—how speedily the execution of the condemning sentence will run through the multitude who stand at the left hand of the avenging judge; and rest assured, ye men who are now hearing me, and whom I freely invite all to enter into the vineyard of God. that this is not the triumph that God is longing after. It is not a victory over your persons then of which He is at all ambitious—it is a victory over your wills now—it is that you do honour to His testimony by placing your reliance on it—it is that you accept of His kind and free assurances that He has no ill-will to you—it is that you cast the whole burden of sullen fear and suspicion away from your hearts and that now, even now, you enter into a fellowship of peace with the God whom you have offended. Oh! be prevailed upon. I know that terror will not subdue you; I know that all the threatenings of the law will not reclaim you; I know that no direct process of pressing home the claims of God upon your obedience will ever compel you to the only obedience that is of any value in His estimation—even the willing obedience of the affections to a father whom you love. But surely when He puts on in your sight the countenance of a Father—when He speaks to you with the tenderness of a Father—when He tries to woo you back to that house of His from which you have wandered, and to persuade you of His good will, descends so far as to reason the matter, and to tell you that He is no more seeking any glory from your destruction than He would seek glory from lighting into a blaze the thorns and the briers, and burning them together—ah! my brethren, should it not look plain to the eye of faith how honest and sincere the God of your redemption is, who is thus bowing Himself down to the mention of such an argument! Do lay hold of it, and be impressed by it, and cherish no longer any doubt of the good will of the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and let your faith work by love to Him who hath done so much and said so much to engage it, and let this love evince all the power of a commanding principle within you, by urging your every footstep to the new obedience of new creatures in Christ Jesus your Lord.

Thus the two-fold benefit of the gospel will be realized by all who believe and obey that gospel. Reconciled to God by the death of His Son, regenerated by the power of that mighty and all-subduing Spirit who is at the giving of the Son, your salvation will be complete—washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

SERMON XXXI.

*Address to Dr. Duff.**

"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever."—PSALM xlviii. 8.

WHEN a matter is only heard by us we may or may not believe, according to our impression of the testimony; but when seen as well as heard, all unbelief is at an end. In another passage of the Psalms we read—"glorious things are said of thee, O Zion." At this stage these things may still be the objects of distrust, or at best of a dim and dubious faith. But when what is said to us is also seen by us, unbelief can no longer stand its ground against such a verifica-

* Dr. Duff was a favourite student of Dr. Chalmers at St. Andrew's. On his nomination as the first missionary sent by the Established Church of Scotland to India, Dr. Chalmers was appointed by the presbytery of Edinburgh to preach and preside at the ordination on the 12th of August, 1829, in St George's Church. Dr. Duff revisited Scotland in 1835, and having recruited his health, and kindled over all the country a new zeal for the missionary cause, he returned to Calcutta in 1839. The following discourse was delivered in St. George's Church, on the 10th of October in that year.

tion When it comes to this—"That as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God,"—when, in the language of Job, we might say thereof, "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee," all incredulity or doubt must give way before such a manifestation, and what before was doubted or even disbelieved may thus become a thing of fixed and absolute certainty.

Now that was true of the visible and earthly Jerusalem may still be true of the heavenly. In regard to the latter the same progress, though not by the very same steps, from darkness to light, from doubt to certainty, may be travelled under our Christian economy, that was frequently experienced in regard to the former under the Jewish economy. The heavenly and enduring realities wherewith we have to do are first heard by the hearing of the ear in the word of the gospel, and may afterward be seen, if not with the eye of the senses at least with the eye of the understanding, when that gospel is made to come to us not in word only but in power. When we thus liken the mental to the ocular demonstration, we may be charged with speaking figuratively, or as some may think mystically; but we make use of no other figure than that which the psalmist does when he prays the Father of lights that he might "open his eyes to behold the wondrous things contained in the law," or than that which the greatest of the apostles does when he prays in behalf of his disciples, that "the eyes of their understandings might be enlightened." Whether in reference to the earthly Jerusalem, the things of which were afar from the Hebrews who lived in the provinces, or in reference to the heavenly Jerusalem, the things of which are above us all who are still but pilgrims and sojourners in this world, in reference to both there is a way in which they may be advanced from things of hearsay to things of perception. The former, that is, the Hebrews, might at any time see the things of their Jerusalem in journeying thitherward, and viewing them with the eye of external observation. But even metaphysicians as well as inspired men tell us of the faculty of inward observation. Writers in science speak to us of conscience and of consciousness, and writers in Scripture speak of the manifestation of the truth to the conscience—such a manifestation as is competent both to the barbarian and the Greek, to the wise and to the unwise; and in virtue of which even an unlettered peasant may be translated out of darkness into marvellous light—may confidently and warrantably say, "I was once blind, but now I see."

It is now a little more than ten years ago, being in August, 1829, that in the work of setting you apart to the office of a Christian missionary, I expatiated as fully as I could within the limits of a single address on the nature and evidence of this peculiar manifestation. I can only now state the evidence, but without enlarging on the explanation of it. The Spirit of God must interpose ere an effectual cognizance can be taken of it by men He in the first instance can remove the veil from the heart and make the consciousness of him on whom he operates more alive than any light of nature can, to the sinfulness and defects and the wretched infirmities of his own character. He in the second instance can remove the veil from Scripture, and can make the conscience of him on whom he operates more alive than any light of nature can, to the dread authority of the law, to the sacredness and majesty of the great Lawgiver.

When such materials as these are thus brought within his reach, the sense of guilt and of danger which is thereby awakened not only begets the desire of relief, but prompts the inquiries and the aspirations of moral earnestness; and the same Spirit who by the light which He casts on the tablet of the human character, led him to behold the virulence of that moral disease under which he labours, also by the light which He casts on the tablet of the outward revelation, leads him to behold the sufficient and altogether suitable remedy provided for it in the gospel. It is this adaptation of the objective Bible to the fears and the disorders and the felt wants of the subjective human nature which leads the converts of the present day to conclude from the writings, what the con-

verts of the first age concluded from the words of the apostle—"These men tell us all that is in our hearts, and verily God is in them of a truth." It is not less a matter of rational evidence that the heavenly Physician had to operate on the mind and enable it to see the before hidden things of its own state and the things of Scripture, than it is a matter of ocular evidence to the man who has been relieved of a cataract that the earthly physician had to operate on his body and enable him to see the things of external nature. There is no more of fancy or fanaticism in the one case than the other. The argument is the same in kind, though far more intense in the feeling of it, with that argument in natural theology which serves to establish that the world of nature came from the hand of God because of its numerous subserviencies to the physical wants of man. In like manner do we reason that the word of Scripture has come to us from the hands of God, because of its no less striking adaptations and subserviencies to the properties and wants, and so to the well-being of man's moral constitution. It affects not the character of the argument while it adds prodigiously to its impression and its strength, that our first sight of its promises is given us in answer to prayer or by the operation of the Spirit from above. In the face of contempt and obloquy do we affirm of this argument, this manifestation of the truth to the conscience, and in virtue of which the gospel is ushered into the heart of man with power, and with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance, that derided as it may have been in the halls of literature, where plebeian Christianity if noticed at all is spoken of in contumely and scorn, the argument is both as firm in its basis, and as logical in the whole of its structure and effect, as any reasoning in moral or mental science propounded from the chair of philosophy in all the forms and with all the confidence of academic demonstration.

It must be on some such evidence that the philosophy of missions is based. We send forth the heralds of salvation, but we cannot invest them with the power of working miracles as the badge of their apostleship. Whatever the persuasive influences may be which they carry along with them, it must be in the words which they utter and not in the works which they perform. The credentials of their message must be somehow bound up in the substance of the message itself, for we cannot now say, as did the first teachers of Christianity, Verily, the signs of an embassy from heaven have been wrought amongst you in signs and wonders and mighty deeds; but in the absence of these accompaniments, external to the message, and which they could appeal to in other days as vouchers for its credibility, there may still be the same credibility in the very things of the message itself, which from the beginning has been applied to them. By one faculty they might hear the message, and by another faculty, as that of seeing, they can be made to perceive the truth of its subject-matter, and to say—As we heard, so have we seen—then may it be understood how, without a sensible miracle, there may arise in the mind a well-founded belief in the truth of Christianity.

Now this is precisely what happens in the great majority, we should rather say in all the instances of conversion, whether in or out of Christendom. What is received by one faculty, by the hearing of the ear, is recognized by another, not by the seeing with the eye of the outer, but by the seeing with the eye of the inner man. After that the Spirit of God has made palpable to the exercised conscience of the inquirer the disease of humanity, and has made alike palpable the adaptations profoundly skilful and pregnant with the most satisfactory evidence of that counterpart remedy which is provided for it in the gospel—it is thus that without miracle, with no other operation than that of preaching the word and praying for the Spirit to give it efficacy, and by no other apparatus than the simple apparatus of the Bible and the conscience, may a light be struck out between them, by which things hidden from the wise and the prudent are revealed to the veriest babes in literature. It is this which makes the evidence of Christianity so accessible to every member of the human family—so portable, if I may use the expression, to every quar

ter of the globe. Thus one and the same message from heaven might well find the same acceptance everywhere, and that because of the identity of human nature all the world over. It is thus that the word of God can open for itself an avenue to the inner recesses of every soul—and discerner as it is of the thoughts and intents of the heart, can work a deeply seated conviction there of its own truth, and its own authority. It is the key which unlocks every bosom, and by its universal adaptation to the universal state and character of humanity, it is fitted to establish its own moral supremacy in every territory where men are to be found. The children of this world may denounce and may deride as mystical that light which is to lighten all nations, that evidence which is to Christianize all people. But, blessed be God, that self-evidencing power of the truth, which is the laughing stock of many adversaries, is more and more a thing now of experimental verification. Without it we should be powerless abroad, and there would be fanaticism and folly in the enterprise of missionaries; but without it we should be alike powerless and inefficient at home, and there would be the very same fanaticism and folly in the ordinary ministrations of our own clergymen, the Sabbath services of our own land. And therefore, blessed be God, that we can now lift our appeal to the facts and findings of every-day experience. In the name of those daily conversions which are now taking place in the wilds of Paganism—in the name of those glorious revivals which are now taking place within the limits of our own Church and country, do we affirm the equal significancy and equal power of manifestation in both, so that when speaking of the Holy Ghost and the efficacy of his demonstration on the consciences of men, we only speak the things of actual and historical fulfilment, we are but speaking the words of truth and of soberness.

To be fully accomplished for the work of a missionary one would need to conjoin two things which are often to be in a state of separation from each other, and not so often realized together in the character and person of one and the same individual. The first is that wisdom which in the regulation of all its proceedings bears a respect to the general laws of nature and lessons of experience; the second is that piety which looks for the success of its proceedings only to the special blessing of God. In virtue of the former our accomplished missionary will be as strenuous in the forthputting and exercise of his own powers as if man did all—in virtue of the latter he will be as distrustful of self, and as humbly depending on the power that is above, as if God did all. It is because of the former that he works, and it is because of the latter that he prays—a truly blessed fellowship, to which, in the history of Christianization by human agency, the gospel of Jesus Christ is indebted for all its triumphs, from the days of Paul, who strove mightily according to the grace of God that worked in him mightily, to the days of a more recent apostleship, beginning with the missionary Eliot, who, as the fruit of his lengthened and laborious experience among the Indians of North America, left behind this most precious of recorded sayings—That through faith in Christ Jesus it was in the power of pains and of prayer to do anything.

Every view which can be taken of the office to which ten years ago you were set apart in this place by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, points to the same conclusion. Among others, the text to which we have referred, and on which we have founded the peculiar argument of this day, affords a very clear and palpable illustration of it. The message of the gospel must first be received by the hearing of the bodily ear, for "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" And this message of the gospel must, secondly, be recognized as true by the seeing of the mental eye—by that faith which is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God. For the fulfilment of the first of these objects you have put forth an industry, and let me add, a sagacity, both alike evincing the important share which the natural faculties of man have in the business of a missionary. By a device of admirable skilfulness and correspondent suc-

cess, you have brought many of the most influential families of Hindostan within reach of the hearing of the word of God. You have instituted a school mainly of scriptural lessons and scriptural exercises. You have practised no deceit upon the natives, for all is above boards and it is universally known that the volume which forms the great text and substratum of your scholarship, is the book of the religion of the Christians. But you at the same time, have studied to multiply the attractions of this school—you have not only instituted a lectureship on the evidences of Christianity, but, for the purpose of engaging the attendance chiefly of the higher classes you have pressed into the service both the physical and the mathematical sciences, and what might startle some, have superadded the doctrines of political economy—and all that the votaries of science might be lured within the precincts of sacredness. It is thus that the youth of India of all ranks, and especially of the upper orders of society, have passed through your seminary in successive hundreds, familiarized with the language and seasoned with the subject-matter of inspiration. It is thus that many have heard with the hearing of the ear, and at least been disarmed of all hostility to the gospel, and some of these many have been made to see, and been converted, and become the declared friends and champions of our faith. It delights me, sir, to know, as the fruit of my intimate converse and of my acquaintance with your principles and your thoughts, that while you have done so much to obtain an extensive hearing for the gospel of Jesus Christ in the most likely and promising quarters of human society, you are at the same time fully and feelingly aware what that high and external quarter is whence alone the seeing comes, and that unless a blessing, to be evoked only by prayer, shall descend from the sanctuary above upon your enterprise, all the labour you have bestowed upon it will prove but a vain and empty parade. Let me earnestly recommend the continuance of this sacred and fruitful union —a union between the diligence of ever-working hands and the devotion of ever-praying hearts. Men of various moods and temperaments and different states of spirituality and intellect, will be variously affected by the spectacle. Those of shrewd, but withal of secular intelligence, will think lightly of your supplications, perhaps even speak contemptuously of those outpourings of the Spirit on which, I trust, you will ever wait and ever watch with humble expectancy. Those of serious, but withal of weak and driveling piety, will think lightly of your science, and perhaps even speak with rebuke of your geometry, and your economics, and your other themes of strange and philosophic nomenclature, as things that have in them a certain cast of heathenish innovation, prejudicial to the success, because incongruous with the simplicity of the gospel. But amid these reproaches on the right and on the left, persevere as you have begun; and whether, on the one hand, they be the cold rationalists who assail you with their contempt, or, on the other hand, they be the fanatical religionists who look on you with intolerance, continue to do what all men of sense and of sacredness have done before, and you will at length reap the fulfilment of the saying—that wisdom is justified of her children.

Before coming to a close, I cannot but advert to that special Providence which has withdrawn you for a season from the immediate field of your missionary labours. What threatened to be a disaster has turned out a signal blessing to this Scheme of the General Assembly. It has given ten-fold impulse to the cause; nor do I need to expatiate at all on the palpable fact, that by your presence and your exertions at home, you have enhanced, and fully in this proportion, the interest felt throughout Scotland in the Christianity of India. But over and above this special benefit, there is another of a still more comprehensive character, conferred by your means upon the Church, and which, if rightly followed up, will tell most prosperously and productively in the advancement of all its Schemes.—I allude to the advocacy you have made of your objects and views, and that not an advocacy confined to a particular spot whither all who chose might repair and

listen to you, but an advocacy carried by your own personal locomotion from one part of the country to another, so that instead of waiting till the public should by a spontaneous act shake off its own apathy, you with greater wisdom, and far greater effect, went aggressively forth in making assault upon a public awakened by the urgency of your appeals out of the slumber of its before deep and hopeless indifference. This is the only way to originate an interest not yet felt, and the best way by which to perpetuate and vastly to extend it. You were the first, I believe, to set the example of thus passing from parish to parish, and from presbytery to presbytery, in behalf of your own cause, and it only needs to be so carried forward in behalf of other causes, as to fill the whole length and breadth of the land, in order to reap a ten-fold more abundant harvest from the liberalities of the people than has ever yet been realized, and to make the beloved Church of our fathers the most efficient organ of Christian beneficence which the world ever saw.

Allow me, sir, to say, as being specially connected with another great Scheme of the Church of Scotland,* that we are both alike free of those jealousies which are sometimes felt between one philanthropic society and another. They proceed, it appears to me, on a false arithmetic, or rather on a misapprehension, in virtue of which it is that the natural and what may be called the moral arithmetic, are confounded with each other. It is by the natural that you estimate the means—it is by the moral that you estimate the motives; and it is quite a possible thing that the process by which the means of benevolence are somewhat abridged, may be the very process by which a ten-fold force is given to the motives of benevolence. Nothing more palpably true than that the guinea which has been parted with for some object of foreign charity, is no longer in reserve for an object of home charity. But the same application which drew the guinea from the hand, sent an impulse to the heart, insomuch that he who has been so operated upon is a more hopeful subject for a fresh application than the man whose purse has never yet been opened—and just because his sensibilities have never yet been addressed in the cause of liberality. It is true, in fact, that our two causes, our two committees, might work into each other's hands. Should the first take the precedency, and traverse for collections the whole of Scotland, the second would only find the ground more softened and prepared for an abundant produce to itself. It acts not by exhaustion—it acts by fermentation. It is preposterous to speak of exhaustion. Who exhausts himself?—who carries his charities so far as to abridge by them the general habit of his expenditure?—who does more than cast into the treasury some unmissed fraction of that fund which is familiarly known by the name of pocket-money?—who, after such a surrender, does not feel himself to all sense as entire as before for a new application, and only the more inured by it to the self-denial and the sacrifices of charity.

Let there be two towns of equal wealth and population, the first of which has never been addressed in behalf of any philanthropic object, and the second of which is plied every fortnight for one or other of those numerous societies that are now in operation—to which of them would the patrons of some new enterprise repair with the greatest hope of success? All experience replies to the latter of them. They are mainly, in fact, the same names which recur and are prominent in all the most distinguished charities of our land. By each distinct contribution the fund of charity is doubtless somewhat impaired; but all the feelings of charity—a willingness to distribute—a readiness to communicate—these are enhanced by the exercise; and we are yet very far from the maximum to which, under the operation of these various elements, the liberalities of our population may be carried. With the slight encroachment that is made by one society on the *materiel* of benevolence, there is a quickening and an excitement given to the *morale* of it—and the other societies just speed in proportion the more that they follow in the

* The Church Extension Scheme.

direction of that predecessor which has opened a way for them. We are not counting on the powers of that alchemy which transmutes everything into gold —ours is a higher and nobler alchemy —the alchemy of the heart—in virtue of which the charity which in behalf of some one object is kindled there, expands at length from one object to another, till it has learned to cast a wide and a wakeful eye over all the sufferings and all the necessities of our species. They therefore who would represent our two committees as of adverse influence and operation upon each other, have never attended either to the facts or to the philosophy of the subject, and evince the same gross misunderstanding of the true mechanism of our nature that is done by those who would repress the liberality of the working-classes in behalf of Bible or missionary objects lest it should haste their descent to a lower level, and fill the neighbourhood with pauperism. The fact is, that it widens their distance from pauperism and translates into the moral habit and elevation of generosity those who otherwise might be degraded into that sloth or that sordidness which turn so many into receivers. It is on these grounds that I would have the two committees to join hand in hand, and to act in perfect fearlessness and perfect friendship the one with the other. The success of the first will be the best security or guarantee for the success of the second — they will grow with each other's growth—they will strengthen with each other's strength.

But I ought to apologize for expatiating on this topic so long, while you sir are standing before me. It is for the purpose of expressing my hope, that under the inspiration of that principle which under God you have done so much to awaken, both the prayers and the liberalities of this your native land will follow you where you are going. I confidently feel that I am but the organ for the expressing of the collective and unanimous mind of this congregation when I say that their prayers and their wishes go along with you. In the language of Paul to his converts, we would commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you and all your spiritual children an inheritance among them which are sanctified. It is not for us to lift that veil which overhangs the secrets of futurity, or with prophetic inspiration to utter these words of the apostle for which His disciples sorrowed most of all—that we shall see your face no more. To God alone is reserved the knowledge of the times and of the seasons, and to us belongs a solemn sense of the uncertainty of these things. Enough for us that we know our present duty, and the certainty of their future heaven to every faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus; yet without presumption, I trust, may we give utterance to the impression that is upon our spirits, of the aspect—the singularly prophetic aspect, not merely of the days in which we live, but both of Christendom, that region you are about to leave, and of Eastern Asia, that region of ancient idolatry whither you are going; for we can notice on that distant horizon the faint breakings of evangelical light, which, like the dawn of early morn, may perhaps increase more and more till the drying up of the Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the East may be prepared. And here, in strong and immediate manifestation, do we see the heavings of a general and wayward restlessness till all the ancient kingdoms of authority have been loosened — and perhaps through a mid-way passage of desolations and judgments, the kingdoms of this world are soon to become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But we shall enter no further on these topics of yet unfulfilled prophecy, or attempt to grope our way through not a total, but a twilight darkness — a darkness visible over the perspective which lies before us. Duties are ours —events are God's; and while we meddle not with the matters too high for us—with the secret things which belong to Him, let us ever bear in mind, that one of the most clearly revealed things which belong to us and to our children, is to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven. God grant that each of us in his own proper vocation may be found faithful in that day, giving full proof of his ministry;

and whether in churches at home or by missionaries abroad, may both you and we have grace to acquit ourselves as faithful labourers throughout this seed-time of the earth's coming regeneration, in the full development of which it is that the cross of Christ shall behold the consummation of its triumphs.

SERMON XXXII.

*Sermon at the Opening of Free St. John's, Glasgow.**

"Take heed what ye hear."—MARK iv. 24. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."—LUKE viii. 18.

THE mightiest effects are ascribed to hearing in Scripture. That little organ, the human ear, is spoken of as the duct or pathway by which the richest blessings whereof humanity is capable are conveyed to the soul. In one place we read of it as the channel by which faith enters—"Faith cometh by hearing;" and it is "by faith that we are saved." In another, that our life, by which life everlasting is meant, hinges upon it—"Hear, and your soul shall live." And again, in counterpart to this we read that—"If ye will not hear, I will send a curse upon you; I will bring your house to desolation."—all marking that somehow or other, to hear, and to hear aright, is the channel and the great stepping-stone to those who now sit in the shadow of death, and by which they are conducted to life everlasting.

With such representations as these of the vast importance of hearing, one cannot but think, at the opening of a new church, how big, how pregnant such an event must prove either for weal or wo to hundreds—it may be thousands—of unperishable spirits, because standing, as it may, for centuries—nay, the site, perhaps, of future fabrics to the end of the world. What is to be done here may tell on the everlasting destiny not of ourselves only, but of our children's children throughout many generations. We are sometimes told of the mighty doings which go on within the walls of an exchange, where the bargains that are made from week to week, the commercial transactions which are there settled, bear on the state and fortune of whole classes of society—or within the walls of a university, where the lessons daily given are deposited in the minds of assembled youth, who, in the coming age, are to fill the highest departments of public usefulness—or within the walls of a court-house, where sentences are passed by which character, and property, and life, the dearest of all earthly interests, are disposed of—or within the walls of a parliament, on whose votes and decisions hang the fate of nations, and those great events which figure on the arena of this world's large and visible history. But to a man of larger vision, who has an eye and a comprehension for things still larger than these, all that we have now spoken of is eclipsed and cast into the shade by the might and the magnificence of those doings which take place within the walls of a church, and which concern a far sublimer history than that of nations, even the history of souls subsist-

* "I had the high satisfaction," says Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, in his work entitled "Germany, England, and Scotland," "of hearing Dr. Chalmers. You know that he was minister of Glasgow, first in the Tron Church, and afterwards in St. John's. Dr. Brown, his friend and successor in the latter church, having left the Establishment in 1843, his people built him a Free Church, in which they studiously endeavoured to give the architecture a certain style of elegance, in order, no doubt, to show what can be done in our own day by the free contributions of Christians. The steeple tower and façade of this church make it one of the finest in Scotland. I will not here repeat passages of the sermon; I have already spoken of Chalmers, and besides, some of his discourses, translated into French by Professor Diodati, one of the best preachers of Geneva, are known to everybody. But what I would say is, that it was the last time that Chalmers preached in Glasgow, where he had first begun to be known to the Christian world. You can imagine the desire felt in that city to hear him—the crowds that gathered from all quarters; but you can have no idea of the order and the devotion of the assembly. The collection on leaving the church amounted to 40,000 francs—£1600—for the morning service only. There was another in the afternoon, and one in the evening." The sermon which follows was the one thus alluded to—preached at the opening of Free St. John's, Glasgow, on June 8, 1845. The whole sum contributed on that occasion at the different services amounted to £1778, 14s. 11½d.

ing in immortal vigour after all the empires of earth shall have fallen; and on the high scale and reckoning of eternity, the annals of our entire species, from the creation of Adam to the day of judgment, shall appear like a tale that is told, or but a brief evolution in the progress of an administration that never ends. They are words of eternal life which are spoken here; and on your reception of these words it depends whether that life is to be laid hold of, or that life of blessedness and glory is to be forever forfeited. They are the seeds of an unfading vegetation which are falling abroad and being scattered here; and it will depend on the soil of your own hearts whether they shall germinate into the briers and thorns whose end is to be burned, or into trees of righteousness to be afterwards transplanted into the Paradise of God.

But human hearts are reached through the medium of human ears; and it is on the question of how you hear, that there hinges the mighty difference between a wretched and a glorious eternity. God seeth not as God seeth, and they estimate things in heaven in another way than we do on earth; and so this fabric, which rises in such graceful elevation before the sight of admiring passengers, bears to the spiritual eye a far deeper interest in its future history than it does to the natural eye in its present aspect. By the one estimate we pronounce on what is manifest to all—the tastefulness and beauty of the edifice in which we are now assembled; by the other estimate we pronounce on things of mightier import, though not to be evolved till the day shall declare them, when the Lord writeth up the people, and will count of this man and that man that he was born there. The outgoings of this place are to eternity; and the angels above are fastening their regards on it as they would on a nursery of immortals, who may yet company with themselves in their everlasting habitations. And oh, it is affecting to think, that within these four corners, and on this limited platform before me, an operation may from Sabbath to Sabbath be going on in human bosoms, subtle and unseen, it may be, but charged with results of which heaven and hell will attest the magnitude and the endurance, long after this earth is burned up, and these heavens have passed away. The word of the gospel sounded forth here will let us hope, be to many the savour of life unto life, and to some, we fear—oh! that we could warrantably say, not to many, or to any—will it be the savour of death unto death.

But this big alternative will at once convince us, that it is not every sort of hearing that will serve the purpose—a lesson strongly and impressively set forth in the parable of the sower. It is only by hearing in a certain way that we come to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. And indeed the same holds of all other sciences and all other subjects, as well as Christianity—in the things of human as well as in the things of divine learning—in the lessons of natural knowledge as well as in the lessons of religion. I should like you to consider wherein it is that those two great branches of mental acquisition and improvement agree, and thus that you may be all the better prepared to understand wherein, also, it is that they differ. To master any part of common or literary education, you must often listen to the instructions of a teacher; but it is not every kind of hearing that will avail you—you must hear with an earnest desire after knowledge. And so it is in religion; for we read in the Bible that we must give earnest heed to the things which we have heard, and desire the sincere milk of the word. And you must hear with attention—but so also is it in religion, for in the Bible we read, and that repeatedly, that we must attend to the words of instruction. And we must be diligent in hearing; but as in common scholarship, so in the scholarship by which we become wise unto salvation; for we further read, that if we hearken diligently to the Lord, He will cause us to behold that which is good, and our soul shall delight itself in fatness,—all marking, therefore, a similarity in the methods by which we come to the understanding and knowledge of natural things, and to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is life everlasting. In both these depart-

ments, then, the human mind is put upon a like busy and strenuous exercise of its faculties—the faculty of earnest desirousness, the faculty of attention, the habits and the faculties of unwearied industry. The pursuits and the processes by which we arrive at a natural knowledge of the things which concern us here, are in all these respects at one with the pursuits and processes by which we arrive at the spiritual and the saving knowledge of the things which belong to our everlasting peace, or to the good of our eternity. But along with this there is one most important respect in which they differ and we feel an explanation of that difference to be necessary ere we can found upon it our special directions for taking heed how you hear.

But before explaining this difference, let me again state—and I cannot do it too clearly or too earnestly—that though something more is necessary for the scholarship of Christianity than for the scholarship of human learning, yet there should be the same busy application of natural methods and of the natural faculties when engaged with the prosecution of both. Whatever the something may be which is needed for religious, and which is not needed for other and ordinary knowledge, it is nothing which ought to supersede your utmost desire, your utmost attention, and the utmost forthputting of all your intellectual powers, whether of memory, or of apprehension, or of rational inference, or of the common mental efforts by which you arrive at the understanding of anything else, and which you should just put forward in like manner when you are labouring to understand the doctrine of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Whatever more is necessary for the right discernment of these, it is not intended to set aside the natural powers of the mind, but, in fact, it stimulates and gives effect to the exertion of them. If you want to become wise in the contents of the Bible, deal with it as you would with any other book whose contents you wanted to master and thoroughly understand—read it diligently—read it heedfully—read it with the strenuous exercise of all the intelligent and discerning powers of the mind—compare passage with passage, and address yourself to this work of divine authorship just as you would to a work of human authorship. It is true that there is a distinction between the two but not such a distinction as should obliterate the sameness or similarities of treatment which I have now insisted on. Take this along with you, I entreat; and then may I, with all the greater safety, make known to you what that distinction is.

The distinction is this:—You can become a proficient in the things of natural religion, by dint of the natural faculties, and of these alone. To become a proficient in the knowledge of things spiritual and divine, you must still put forth, and that on their most strenuous and busy exercise, your natural faculties, but you will never come to the knowledge of these other and higher things—that is, never to the knowledge of them savingly and spiritually—by these alone. You must ply, and that with all perseverance and all diligence, your powers of attention and understanding, both in the hearing and the reading of the Scriptures; but still you will not succeed unless the Spirit of God come down from on high, and open your understanding to understand the Scriptures. This is the great peculiarity which appertains to the Bible, and to no other book in the world. When it is a book of mere human performance, then by the mere unaided exercise of my own human powers I can master all that is in it—and after, say two or three perusals, I may get possession of the whole mind and meaning of its author, and have nothing more to learn from him. It is not so with the Bible. The Spirit of God is there speaking to me, for it is He who dictated the whole of that volume, insomuch that every word and every sentence of it is the produce of His inspiration. But for me to read it with right and saving discernment, the Spirit of God must not only speak to me, He must also work in me—so that not only does he hold forth to me a light from without, even that word of God whereof He is the alone author, but He must also clear up my faculty of vision within, and so open my eyes as to behold

the wondrous things which are contained therein. It is thus that by means of this peculiarity which signalizes the Bible, which separates and sets it apart from all the works of human authorship—it is thus that this great work, this word of God, makes proof of its high original, its descent from heaven to all those who, enlightened from on high, are enabled to read or to hear it, not with natural only, but with spiritual discernment. We have already said, that whatever man can write or man can speak, man also, perhaps at one or two readings, or at one or two hearings, can fully understand But when God writes, as He has done in the Bible, or when God speaks, as He does by the mouth of those who are the expounders of the Bible, then taking up its own language, we may say, Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor, unless by the help of that Spirit who alone searcheth all things, even the deep things of God? It is thus that without the Spirit the Bible is a sealed book to us, while with the Spirit, its otherwise hidden and unsearchable things come forth in open manifestation; for as an evidence of its divine property, and so of its divine original, while human compositions can tell us no more after two or three perusals,—in behalf of this divine composition we appeal to the aged Christian peasant, who has read his Bible a hundred times over, whether, as he is now reading, some new light and new lesson have not evolved themselves so as to refresh and satisfy his soul, as if the Spirit at every new time made some new and additional disclosure from the contents of the book, the truths and the treasures of which are inexhaustible—insomuch that to the end of his days it proves to him a mine of endless wealth, from which he is ever getting more, the more he explores and the more he digs in it, so that every day he finds in it a greater fulness of meaning than before, and every day is more satisfied with its richness.

Before proceeding to found any directions on this important peculiarity by which the things of Scripture stand distinguished rom all the things of mere natural knowledge or of mere human authorship, I should like to present you with an illustration of the difference between a natural and a spiritual discernment of the very same truth, though time is passing on, and I must therefore confine myself to give one instance as an example of all the rest.

We have not to travel out of the record for the purpose of having this truth made known to us—that God is everywhere present. It meets the observation of the natural man in his reading of the Bible; and he understands, or thinks he understands, the terms on which it is delivered; and he can speak of it with consistency; and he ranks it with the other attributes of God; and he gives it an avowal and a formal admission among the articles of his creed —and yet with all this parade of light and of knowledge, he, upon the subject of the all-seeing and the ever-present Deity, labours under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. Carry him abroad, and you will find that the light which beams upon his senses from the objects of sight completely overpowers that light which ought to beam upon his spirit from this object of faith. He may occasionally think of it as he does of other things; but for every one practical purpose, the thought abandons him so soon as he goes into company, or takes a part in the next worldly concern, which in the course of his business comes round to him. It completely disappears as an element of conduct, and he talks and thinks and reasons just as he would have done had his mind in reference to God been in a state of entire darkness. If anything like a right conception of the matter ever existed in his heart, the din and the daylight of the world drive it all away from him.

Now, to rectify this case, it is surely not necessary that the Spirit add anything to the truth of God's omnipresence as it is put down in the written record: it will be enough that He gives to the mind on which He operates a steady and enduring impression of this truth. Now, this is one part of His office; and accordingly it is said of the unction of the Spirit, that it is an unction which

remaineth. Neither is it necessary that the light which He communicates should consist in any vision which He gives to the eye, or in any bright impression upon the fancy, of any one thing not to be found within the pages of the Bible; it will be enough if He give a clear and vigorous apprehension of the truth, just as it is written, to the understanding. Though the Spirit should do no more than give vivacity and effect to the truth of the constancy of God's presence, just as it stands in the written record, this will be quite enough to make the man who is under its influence carry an habitual sense of God about with him—think of Him in the shop and in the market-place—walk with Him all the day long, and feel the same moral restraint upon his doings as if some visible superior, whose virtues he revered and whose approbation he longed after, haunted his every footstep, and kept an attentive eye fastened upon the whole course of his history. The natural man may have sense, and he may have sagacity, and a readiness withal to admit the constancy of God's presence as an undeniable doctrine of the Bible; but to the power of this truth he is dead, and it is only to the power of this world's interests and pleasures that he is alive. The spiritual man is the reverse of all this, and that without carrying his conceptions a single hairbreadth beyond the communications of the written message. He makes no pretensions to wisdom by one jot or tittle beyond the testimony of Scripture; and yet, after all, he lives under a revelation to which the other is a stranger. It does not carry him by a single footstep without the field of the written revelation, but it throws a radiance over every object within it. It furnishes him with a constant light which enables him to withstand the domineering influence of sight and of sense. He dies unto the world—he lives unto God; and the reason is that there rests upon him a peculiar manifestation by which the truth is made visible to the eye of his mind, and a peculiar energy by which it comes home upon his conscience. And if we come to inquire into the cause of this speciality, it is the language of the Bible, confirmed as we believe it to be by the soundest experience, that every power which nature has conferred upon man, exalted to its highest measure, and called forth to its most strenuous exercise, is not able to accomplish it; that it is due to a power above nature and beyond it; that it is due to what the apostle calls the demonstration of the Spirit—a demonstration withheld from the self-sufficient exertions of man, and given to his believing prayers.

Now take this as a specimen of what holds in regard to all the other doctrines and truths of our holy religion. There is a certain understanding of them which the natural man has, but this is very different from the spiritual and practical discernment of them which he alone can have who has been taught of God, or come under the teaching of the Holy Ghost—a teaching, however, I would have you well to observe, not by which you are informed of things that are not in this book, but only a teaching which impresses the truths of Scripture clearly and effectively, and with operative power on the mind of him who reads the Bible as he ought, or who hears an expounder of the Bible as he ought. The natural man may read with some degree of interest and intelligence, and may hear with still greater; but what more palpable than the wholesale phenomenon presented not by individuals only, but by the great bulk and body of many a congregation, who will listen, and perhaps be impressed for a time, and think they understand the preacher—nay, perhaps, do honestly admire him, and yet are not converted by him?

This is a matter in which sound experience and sound theology are most palpably at one. There is no withstanding of the fact. The people can be brought in full assemblage together, and that not merely on the impulse of an occasion, but Sabbath after Sabbath might the church be filled to the very door by a listening, nay, by a delighted—nay, by a solemnized, and for a time it may be by a deeply impressed, and, to all appearance one might think by looking at them, a thoroughly subdued multitude, over whose willing hearts truth and Scripture have obtained a decisive victory, and the voice of the preacher has not only charmed the ears,

but positively carried the feelings and purposes of an obedient people. These demonstrations of sin—these offers of a large and a free salvation—seem as if they had told at the moment of their utterance, and that the work of the pulpit was going on most prosperously. And there is the oratory of the pulpit just as there is the oratory of the platform, and of the bar, and of the senate-house—and the music of the one may regale and elevate just as the other does; but when the question comes, how is it that we have the blossom of so many promises, and withal the sickly produce of so little fruit—what is it that so draws the people together, and yet falls short of converting them?—we have no other answer to give, than that it is but a day of man's power, and not a day of God's power. The virtue so to expound as to attract may be there, but not the virtue so to enlighten as to regenerate. The influence from above is the want; and while apart from any special or extraordinary unction of this sort a man might, on the strength of nature and of its powers alone, become a skilful tradesman, or an able man of business, or an accomplished scholar in any of the arts and sciences of merely human acquirement, so as by dint of their respective lessons to become a good agriculturist, a good physician, a good astronomer—it is precisely because, however versed in the lessons of Scripture, if the Spirit of God withhold from them His efficacy, he does not and cannot become a good Christian.

Let me now found, upon the explanation we have given, a few brief practical instructions both as to how you should read the Bible, and, which substantially is the same thing, as to how you should hear him who from the pulpit expounds and enforces the lessons of the Bible. "Take heed how you hear."

First, then, although the few directions I mean to give bear all of them a special reference to the doctrine that without the Spirit of God we can never read of things sacred to any purpose, or rather although these directions are expressly founded upon that doctrine, yet, notwithstanding, it is our very first direction that you should hear diligently, or in other words, that you bring all your natural faculties, your attention, your intelligence, your memory—all the mental powers, in short, which God hath given you—that you press them into the service of a close and busy engagement, whether with the Bible when you are holding converse with its pages, or with the preacher when you are hanging upon his utterance—and this for the purpose of understanding aright, and being impressed aright, either by what you read or by what you hear. There is nothing in the doctrine of the Spirit which supersedes the very processes in the scholarship of Christianity which are set a going and are of avail in all other scholarship. In operating upon man He does not work against his nature, but He works according to and with his nature. He does not take the work of salvation out of the man's own hands, but He strengthens and enables and rightly equips the man for working out his own salvation.

It is a most mischievous abuse of our doctrine, that because the Spirit does all, man has nothing to do, and so might fold his arms and forbear the exertion of all his faculties, for in truth it is by the man's faculties, and through his faculties, that the Spirit does anything. The effect of His working in us is to set us a working. When He intromits with man, it is not to violate the laws of his constitution; it is not to derange the machinery either of his moral or intellectual nature, but to set that machinery rightly and prosperously a going. So far from setting aside human instrumentality, He has the greatest value for it; for example, in the case of Lydia He did not Himself tell her about the things of salvation, He left that to the apostle; neither did He force these things on her acceptance without any forthputting of her own faculties, and yet He did interpose between these parties, but it was so to open the heart of Lydia that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul. And so also in the case of Peter and Cornelius: He neither took from the one his office as a preacher, nor from the other his powers and duties as a hearer; both were at their right post:

the former earnestly charging and explaining the other as earnestly and diligently listening, and it was when thus severally employed, and not till then, that the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard; and accordingly we are bidden to take heed to the word of the prophecy, and persevere in the exercise till the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts. There never was a more glaring perversion, by a sadly misplaced and a sadly misunderstood orthodoxy, than that because the Spirit does all, man is to do nothing. It is a most blessed truth that the Spirit is given because His aid is indispensable, still He is thus given not to prevent our diligence, but to prompt our diligence, and to set it a going; or, if He find you already diligent, still He is given not to stop that diligence, but to make it effectual. Whether, then, in the way of stirring up the gift that is in you, or for the purpose of bringing down that gift upon you, in the full view of the Spirit and with special reference to His agency for giving effect to your attendance on the means of grace, it is my first direction to one and to all, that in taking heed how you hear, you shall hear diligently.

And then, as a direct preparative for the descent of this blessed influence from on high, it is my second direction—That you shall hear desirously. But desirously for what? There is a great running after ministers in this our day, and this argues a great desire of something or other; but we again put the question—desire of what? Is it to be regaled by the eloquence of the preacher?—is it because you are lured by the report of his high and his far-sounding popularity?—is it because you want a feast for your imagination, or your intellect, or any of your sensibilities, such as you might have when listening to the oratory of the bar, or to the oratory of the senate-house, or even to the idle declamations of the theatre? That is not a desirousness which will help you forward, but rather prove an impediment in the way of your salvation. What I want is the desirousness of the conscience-stricken sinner, earnestly longing to be right with God; it is the simple and serious desire to become wise unto salvation; it is a deep-felt desire for the good of your souls, grounded on the deep sense of their exceeding worthlessness, and yet of the exceeding worth and magnitude of their eternity. The men who can minister best—not to the taste, not to the curiosity, not to the passion for excitement—but who can minister best to the urgent necessities and demands of the conscience, these are the men we should like to see run after—men, it may be, not of gifts, but of graces faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, being themselves men of faith and of prayer, who can best feed the people with the bread of life, because inclined and enabled by their Master to feed them with both knowledge and spiritual understanding. Let yours be a desire for the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby—let yours be a real hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and yours will be the desirousness we mean when, in giving you our second direction as to how you should hear, we tell you to hear desirously.

Our third direction is—Hear with special application to yourself as far as you are warranted to do so by the language of Scripture.—And the language of Scripture does warrant such a specific application throughout a very wide range indeed both of its statements and calls. Who, for example, can refuse the warrant when the Bible makes use of a term so unexcepted, so universal, as "every one?"—"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the law to do them." Here is a passage which carries a sentence of condemnation throughout one and all of the human family; but this very term is the harbinger of other tidings than those of doom and of dismay—"Every one that asketh receiveth." Here then is a message of reconciliation to one and all of the human family, who, in other ways, too, and under other forms of expression, are called to cast themselves in dependence and prayer on that God who sets Himself forth as God in Christ, and holds out the sceptre of a free and gracious invitation to every sinner within the call of the gospel. Hear as for yourself, then, the voice of the preacher,

and thus to yourself will every utterance of his be a word of warning, or a word of encouragement, or a word of direction; you will read the Bible as if it were sent to you individually; you will hear the minister as if he were speaking to you individually. It is a simple advice that I am now rendering; but just as the natural life may be sustained on the simple aliment of air and water and the plainest of food, so it is on simple truths that the spiritual life of man is sustained; and could we only prevail on each reader or each hearer to isolate himself, and either read as if he—personally and particularly—were holding converse with God in the Bible, or hear as if he in the same personal and particular way were holding converse with God through the minister, why, on this advice, plain and simple as it is, there may hinge the good of your eternity, and through a blessing from above on the means of grace, may it prove the very turning-point of your salvation.

Our fourth direction is—Hear distrustfully of yourselves, but dependingly on the promised grace from on high to enlighten and to guide you to all truth. It is a grievous obstacle in the way of your spiritual illumination that you have confidence in your own natural powers of discernment; for the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit, and God, we read, resisteth the proud. It is well, on the other hand, that you have a deep sense of your own natural insufficiency and blindness; for God, we are again told, giveth grace to the humble. Hear diligently, then, and hear desirously. Hear with special application, and hear withal distrustfully of yourselves and dependingly on God, and you are in that very attitude of waiting upon Him in the way both of prescribed and of well-grounded hope which bids the likeliest for the fulfilment of these precious sayings—He who seeketh findeth, and—If any man keep my commandments to him will I manifest myself.

Our last direction as to how you ought to hear is—That you should hear prayerfully. The former directions, indeed, if followed out, will land in this our concluding one. To hear distinctly, and to hear for himself as for his own eternity, and to hear distrustfully of one's self and to hear dependingly on God—these affections of the soul must and will find vent in prayer. Prayer is the vehicle of interchange between earth and heaven—carrying up the desires of the heart, and fetching down the dispensations of grace from on high. When the thing asked for is prompted by man's will and agreeable to God's will, there is not one remaining obstacle in the way of its fulfilment but the want of faith. Now, if you are really set on the spiritual and saving understanding of God's Word, then are your will and God's will most thoroughly at one. Whatever ye ask that is agreeable to the will of God, ye shall receive. Now, we read that it is God's will that all men shall be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; and we further read, that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Are you willing, then, to understand the Scriptures for the saving of your soul? God is abundantly willing for the same thing; and when these two wills meet, what power in earth or in hell can stay the accomplishment of that common object which both are set upon? If you are willing for salvation, and God wills you to be saved, where is the let or hindrance, we would ask, in the way of your blissful eternity? It is true that you must have some faith, even though it were as a grain of mustard seed—some such sense of the reality of the whole matter as that what you hear shall not appear to you as idle tales, and you believe them not.

But then if you had no belief in what the Bible tells of the unseen things of another world, you would have no desire after them—the very existence of the desire proves that there is some sort of faith within you; and let us not forget the encouragement which our Saviour gives, when He tells us that this faith, even though small as an atom, will open a way for you to the mightiest achievements. Go then in good heart and with confidence to the work, both of reading the Bible and of hearing the faithful expounder of the Bible. Whatever ye ask in the name of Christ, ye shall receive; and if you ask for that

knowledge of Himself which is life everlasting. He is both able and willing to do for you what He did for the disciples on their way to Emmaus, to open your understandings that you might understand the Scriptures. The prayer of David, and which availed him, is as available still in the mouth of every earnest inquirer—"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things contained in thy law." "Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light." Awake to the magnitude and reality of these things, and give earnest, prayerful heed to them, and He will translate you out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. The day will be made to dawn, and the day-star to arise in your hearts.

Let me only add, that besides prayer for yourselves, you should make intercession for others also; and more especially on this occasion, that the house in which we are now assembled for the first time may prove a blessing to the families of its hearers—that it may reclaim many to habits of church-going, and in particular, that those young men who are now given to the wanderings of Sabbath profanation, may be lured, and that from early boyhood, to the wholesome practice of regular attendance on the services of the sanctuary, so that that most pleasing of all spectacles—a well filled family pew—may, as in the days of our godlier forefathers, be again the frequent, nay, the general object of our delighted contemplation. Above all, let it be our fervent supplication, that besides the bodily presence of assembled worshippers, there may at all times be the presence of a grace and an unction from on high, that both minister and people may be guided to the right exercise of their respective functions—the one so taught how to speak, and the other how to hear, as to have a fruitful issue in the conversion of many souls. Oh! that this beauteous temple may prove the harbinger of what is goodlier still—the Sabbath quiet and the Sabbath sacredness—and most precious of all, the love and the peace and the holiness and all the graces of our coming heaven to those who repair to it. Thus might a little heaven on earth be realized; and long after we, as the seniors of the present age, are mouldering in our coffins, may the prophetic blessing be fulfilled on our children's children—That because of this man and that man being born here, righteousness has been made to run down all our streets, and to descend with all the force and fulness of an increasing river from generation to generation.

Before I conclude, let me hope that the lesson of how you are to hear has so far told that one may read but a very few of the most pregnant verses in the Bible, short but substantial, as containing in them the very marrow of the gospel, that one or other of these may perhaps take effect on the souls of some who are before me. The first I shall repeat, as we read in the Life of Colonel Gardiner, was the instrument of his conversion, letting, as it were, the light of heaven into his mind, and so as that from that time forward he became a new creature in Jesus Christ. Who knows what may be the effect of the simple reading of a few such verses in your hearing now, and more especially if you consider that it is now God speaking from Himself, and not speaking as in the great bulk of a sermon through the lips of the minister?—"Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus."—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"—"He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew

no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."—"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."—"Herein is love not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins."—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—Such, my brethren, are a few declarations from the word of God. Let me close with a few invitations grounded upon these:—"Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"—"Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope."—"Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty."—"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."—"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

May these true sayings of God sink deep in your hearts, and may the Spirit so press them home that they may be to you the bearers of peace with God and of life everlasting, and to His name be praise.

SERMON XXXIII.

*The Articles of the Covenant.**

"Take hold of my covenant."—ISAIAH lvi. 4, 5.

WE do not enough contemplate the Christian salvation in the form of a covenant, and yet it is often so represented in Scripture. From a very early period indeed in the history of God's dealings with men, this is set forth as the relation in which He and the people who are peculiarly His own are made to stand to each other—we mean, the relation of parties in a covenant, a contract, as it were, having its articles of agreement, its mutual stipulations, its terms of engagement consented to on both sides, and binding upon both. It were well if Christians looked more at this, and dwelt more on this as being the very condition and state of the matter between them and God,—so that instead of the vague and loose and general views that take no real or practical hold of a man, they were made precisely and distinctly to understand what the obligations are which lie upon each—what the things are, on the one hand, they owe to God; and what, on the other hand, the things are which the great God of heaven and earth has bound Himself to do for them,—so that instead of this religion of ours floating before the eye of our mind in the form of a slight, shapeless, shadowy imagination, it shall be clearly apprehended by us as an express and definite scheme, both of what man is engaged by promise to do for God, and of what God is engaged by promise to do for man. We know of nothing better adapted for this purpose than to look at religion in the

* On Sabbath, the 25th April, 1847, Dr. Chalmers preached at the dispensation of the first sacrament administered in the Church of the West Port, Edinburgh—the last sacrament at which he was ever to preside. On that occasion the inexpressible gratification was afforded to him of seeing within a church of his own raising, a goodly number of that very class of the community for whose benefit it was erected, and of knowing that at the table of the Lord there sat down that day about twenty individuals, none of whom for many years before—some of whom not once in the course of a long lifetime—had commemorated the dying love of the Redeemer. Prepared for such occasion, and for such an audience, the sermon which follows has this additional interest attached to it, that it was the last ever written by its author—composed about a month before his death.

light and under the idea of a covenant; and as we have already said that this is the light in which it is regarded and often spoken of in Scripture, let us present you with a few specimens of this.

Numb. xxv. 12, 13.—"Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." This applies, no doubt, to a different covenant from that which obtains between God and us in the present day. Nevertheless I make the quotation because ours has the same characteristics with the covenant of these verses. Ours, too, is a covenant of peace, and the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.

Deut. iv. 23, 31.—"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God"—"for the Lord thy God is a merciful God: He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which He sware unto them." Neither does this refer to our covenant; but I quote it notwithstanding; for neither must we forget our part of the covenant, and God, most assuredly, will not forget His; for ours, too, has the guarantee both of His word and His oath.

Deut. xxix. 12.—"Enter into covenant with the Lord thy God." This is a call on the Israelites, and the same call is upon us now, to enter into covenant with God.

Deut. xxix. 25.—"Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God." Ours, too, is a covenant which if we forsake, wrath will come upon us, as it did upon the Israelites, to the uttermost.

Deut. xxxi. 20.—"Then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant." We, too, may turn away from the service of God, and break the covenant into which we have entered, and so incur the fiercest provocation.

1 Chron. xvi. 15.—"Be ye mindful always of His covenant; the word which He commanded to a thousand generations." Psalm xxv. 14.—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and he will show them His covenant." Psalm lxxviii. 37.—"For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant." Psalm lxxxix. 28.—"My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." Psalm cxi. 5.—"He hath given meat unto them that fear He will ever be mindful of His covenant." Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.—"Thus saith the Lord, if ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers." Jer. xxxiv. 18. —"And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof." Jer. l. 5. —"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Ezekiel xx. 37.— "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Mal. ii. 5.— "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.—"Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Deut. vii. 9–12.— "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to them that hateth Him, He will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers:

Psalm lxxviii. 10.—"They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law." Psalm ciii. 17, 18.—"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them." Psalm cv. 8.—"He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations."

Such, then, are sundry verses out of the many in which the word occurs, and such the various things said in Scripture of a covenant. They will convince you how frequently, or rather how habitually it is, that the relationship in which God stands to His people, and His people to God, is viewed under this particular aspect, and, I hope, will prepare you to listen with all the more attention and earnestness when we proceed to explain what the articles are of that covenant which the gospel of Jesus Christ has overtured from heaven for the acceptance of the world, to which all men are called upon to give themselves, and within the bond of which every true disciple of the Saviour is placed and abides perpetually, mindful of the part which He has in it to the end of his days, till God—never unmindful of His part in it—gives effect and fulfilment to its crowning article, by conferring on the faithful all the glories and rewards of a blissful eternity. Be assured of this covenant that it, too, is ordered in all things and sure—that men may forget and fall away from it, but that God never will—that it is stable as are the laws and ordinances of nature, nay, more lasting than nature itself—that heaven and earth shall pass away, but that none of its words and none of its articles can fail.

Let us now propound what the terms or articles of the Christian covenant are. They are very distinct, and nothing is required but earnest and serious attention that you may have a distinct understanding of them—and surely nothing should concern you more than to get such an understanding of them. It is stated in one of the verses which we have just read, as a choice privilege conferred on those who fear God, that He will show them His covenant. And can there be aught of more importance, whether in time or eternity, for sinners to know, than what that covenant of mercy is, and what its particulars, by laying hold of which they in fact lay hold of life eternal? To show them this covenant, just as you would lay down and make plain to them the articles of a contract, or an agreement, or a treaty, pointing out to sinners, in so many readable and distinct characters, the way of their salvation—oh! that you felt, then, as you ought, how momentous the subject is of our present explanation. What we want to tell you of are the things done by God, and the things to be done by you in order that you might be saved. These, in truth, are the things which the Scriptures principally teach—even, to adopt the words of our Shorter Catechism, "what man has to believe concerning God and what duty God requires from him." These might be stated in greater or less degrees of fulness and length—either very minutely and particularly, or very briefly and generally. We shall take the latter way, and speak to you of these things as comprised in a covenant of four leading articles; and just as in any covenant between two parties certain things are laid upon the one party and certain things upon the other—so in this covenant of four articles between God and man, we should be disposed to regard two of these as standing upon God's side of the covenant and two of them upon man's side of the covenant.

The first of these articles, then, might be said to come wholly from God. It is an overture of mercy to our sinful world, or rather to every man who will consent to enter into the covenant of which this may be regarded as the first and foremost article. But we are expressing it too vaguely and generally when we call it a mere overture of mercy;—it brings us nearer to the real state of the transaction, and sets it forth in the character more obviously of an article or covenant, when we represent the substance of the overture as being the forgiveness of a debt—and more nearly still, that a Surety has stepped forward and undertakes the payment of this debt, even to the last farthing of it.

Even an ordinary debt is often settled in this way, upon a certain specific consideration—generally, as in cases of bankruptcy, on the payment of a composition, but sometimes also on the interposal of a surety, who becomes responsible for the payment of the whole.

Now such a surety in our case is Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for a ransom, poured out His blood—His precious and peace-speaking blood—as the cost of our redemption, and hence termed the blood of the everlasting covenant. This then is the footing on which God holds out forgiveness to all who will but understand well the articles. He will not grant this forgiveness on any other footing. It is not on the footing of general mercy, but on the footing of a thus purchased and thus propitiated mercy, that He holds out forgiveness. It may have been mercy, the mercy of an infinite compassion, not willing that even the chief of sinners should perish—it may have been God's so loving the world, which led to the drawing up of a covenant at all. But now that the covenant is drawn up, it is upon its terms, and upon no other, that the sinner can be taken into acceptance. God will not take into acceptance the transgressors of His law but in such a way as that that law shall be magnified and made honourable. To make provision for this is one great end of the covenant. Christ bare the penalties of the law, and so made an end of sin—that is, of all further reckoning with His own people because of sin, agreeably to what is said of there being no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. And Christ fulfilled the demands of the law, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness—a righteousness which is unto all, and upon all who take hold of the covenant. It is thus that, under the peculiar economy of the gospel, truth and justice have to do with the pardon and acceptance of the sinner as well as mercy. It is just in God the lawgiver to exact the penalty of His broken law, but it were not just to exact it twice over—that is, both from the sinner and the sinner's substitute. It is but justice that the creditor should be paid his debt, but not just that it should be paid him twice—that is, by the surety and the debtor both, for justice requires that the debtor should be released from the whole obligation so soon as the surety has discharged it—and accordingly it is a most important verse, and lets us, as it were, to the principle of the Christian salvation—that God is not only merciful but that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness.

See then, my brethren, the mighty additional strength and security which it gives to the method of salvation, that it is a salvation by covenant, compassed about by all the guarantees of an express formal ratified agreement between two parties mutually bound to each other, or under strict reciprocal engagements to each other. What a condescension to sinners that God hath thus bound Himself, so that they have not only the mercy of God, but the justice and the truth of God upon their sides, as the pledges and the guarantees of their salvation. This is His own express overture pardon—not out of Christ, for out of Christ He is a consuming fire—but pardon in Christ, for in Christ He is a reconciled and reconciling Father. And there is pardon on this footing to all who will—even the worst and most worthless of sinners are welcome to it, insomuch that the ambassadors of God are commissioned to go so far as even to beseech men to enter into reconciliation. This good-will of God in Christ, or more particularly, this mercy of God in Christ, or more particularly still this forgiveness through the blood which Christ shed for us on the cross, may be regarded as the first article of the covenant which we call on you to take hold of.

The first article, then, being a declaration or promise of forgiveness through Christ from the Lawgiver, may be viewed as a thing brought down to us from heaven, and therefore as a thing on God's part. The second article which we now proceed to explain, being a response to this declaration by those on earth to whom it is addressed, may be viewed more properly as a thing on man's part. Say that the declaration is addressed to each of two sinners—and we have a full warrant for addressing it to all—but for the present, let us only

view it as addressed to two and that the first of these does not believe it—then his answer to it is, No; but that the second of them does believe it—and then his answer to it is, Ay. Or, conceive this declaration of forgiveness to be made in the form of an offer, and in this form too—the form of an offer of forgiveness, we are fully warranted to make it unto all. But say, for the present, that it is made to two, and that the first of them, as before, does not believe, then he may well be said to refuse the offer, so that the thing offered is not his; but that the second does believe it, and then may it as well be said of him that he accepts the offer, and so the thing offered is his. Now, this is precisely the footing on which these first and second articles stand to each other in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The man who believes not in Christ, or, which is the same thing, has not the faith, has no part or interest either in its offered forgiveness or any other of its blessings. The man, again, who has the faith, according to his faith so is it done unto him. This fully accords with one and all of the Scripture sayings which relate to this subject: "Believe and ye shall be saved." "Ye are saved by faith." "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Christ is a propitiation through faith in His blood." "Ye are justified by faith:" that is, if ye believe ye are dealt with as righteous persons. "The righteousness of Christ is unto all and upon all who believe." It is by faith that you are said to receive Him. The "as many as received Him," are just the "as many as believe in His name." They who have faith in the atonement, "have received the atonement." It is thus that your faith in Christ constitutes your reception of Christ.

Such is the constitution of the gospel—such the nature of the covenant which we call upon you to take hold of. And is it not a right constitution? Could there be any settlement between two parties among ourselves, or between man and man, if the one did not believe what the other said? or could man ever come into agreement with God if he did not believe God? Would God take any man into acceptance and favour who so far affronted Him as to make Him a liar? But let me tell you that God cannot lie; it is impossible for Him to lie—so we read in the Bible; and let me appeal to yourselves, whether the gravity and the sincerity and the deep sacredness—the divine characteristics of this said Bible, be not in themselves guarantees that none of its sayings will deceive you? And what possible interest can the great God of heaven and earth have in deceiving us? If He were bent on our destruction, and really desirous of it, could not He with all ease make this out, without disgracing Himself by a lie upon the subject. But no; He does not want to destroy, but to save you. He is at this moment longing after your return to friendship with Himself, and this with all the tenderness of a parent bereaved of His children. He tells you so expressly in many, very many of His sayings; and, indeed, it is the substance of these sayings which forms what I have called the first article of the gospel covenant between man and God, even that God makes willing offer of acceptance to you; and the second article is, that you should give God credit for this. Only believe in the glad tidings of great joy, that God makes a free offer of forgiveness to you through the blood of His own Son; and how indeed can any tidings, however good, make you glad and joyful unless you believe in them? Receive the peace-speaking message of the New Testament as a true message; for it is only on your holding it to be true that it can bring any peace to your bosoms—it is only when justified by *faith* that you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. God hath laid a glorious foundation for His covenant to begin with. What He wants you now to do is to place your confidence on this foundation, yes, and to hold it fast—holding fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end. It is indeed a love-inspiring doctrine, that God hath sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins; but it is a doctrine which can no more inspire love than any other, without faith in the doctrine; for it is faith

that worketh by love; and is only when you know and believe the love which God hath to you, that you love Him back again. We love God, says the apostle, because He first loved us. Set your hand, then, to this second article of the covenant—subscribe to the faithfulness of God—put your seal to God being true—count Him faithful who hath promised, and be persuaded that what He hath promised He is both able and willing to perform.

So much for our second article, which lies, you will perceive, on man's side of the covenant. The third article lies upon man's side of the covenant too. The second—that we have been just treating of—relates to man's faith. The third, on which we are now to offer a very few observations, relates to man's obedience—the new obedience of the gospel, or, which is the same thing, to man's service—not service in the oldness of the letter, but service in the newness of the spirit. It is in conformity to our second article that man believes. It is in conformity to our third article that man obeys. That both are required and both are indispensable, is obvious from the whole tenor of Scripture; and, indeed, both are often comprehended in one sentence, sometimes in one clause of a sentence, as making up the substance of Christianity. Our Saviour at the outset of His ministry made proclamation to "repent and believe in the gospel." Paul states the subject-matter of his preaching to lie in repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God, in making an overture of reconciliation, says—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto God, and He will have mercy upon him, and to his God, and He will abundantly pardon him." Faith and obedience, my brethren, go together—the one forms part and parcel of the covenant as much as the other does: you must yield yourselves up unto God, "Teaching all men everywhere," says Paul, "to repent and turn unto God, and to do works meet for repentance." The religion to which we call you is something more than the commencement of a new hope: it is the commencement of a new life—you cease to do evil, you learn to do well; you, in fact, if it be a real work of conversion, an actual taking hold of the true gospel covenant—you will make a full dedication of yourselves unto God; you cease to be the servants of sin, and become the servants of righteousness, or which is the same thing, the servants of that God who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. Be not deceived then. He who subscribes to the covenant, subscribes it in all its articles—yes, and to have the benefits of the covenant, there must be an honest and habitual effort to fulfil all its articles. In the language of our Shorter Catechism, "He turns unto God with full purpose of, and endeavour after, the new obedience of the gospel."

But does not this, it may be thought, just place the sinner where he was again, and bring him back to the old covenant of works? He fell from the old obedience of the former dispensation, and where is the security that he will not fall from the new obedience which is laid upon him by the present dispensation? We were told, while under the economy of the law, to do this and live; and still we are told under the economy of the gospel, that unless we do such and such things, we shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Where, then, is the difference between these? and what the security that in like manner, as under the covenant of works Adam fell, so under the covenant of grace every one who enters, or takes hold of it, may not fall away?

This brings us to the statement and explanation of our last article in the covenant which we have been calling on you to take hold of. There is something in its very title which explains the difficulty, and we trust will remove it from your minds altogether. Remember that it is called the covenant of grace; you may very well see how it should be so styled, from its first article, in which the Lord God, merciful and gracious, holds out the offer of a free pardon through Christ to one and all of us; and you may as readily see how it preserves this character in its second article, in the fulfilment of which all that man does is to give God

credit for His offer, to take Him at His word, to do Him the same homage that we render to every honest acquaintance whom we have in this world—that is, that when He speaks we should believe Him. And accordingly it is said of salvation, that for this very purpose it is of faith, even that it might be by grace. But then the third article, the obedience part of the new covenant, the works of the law demanded as before, does not this throw it all back again, and bring us just where we were? No, my brethren, hear our fourth article, and you will find that it is not as before—for that the glorious covenant to which I would have you all to join yourselves, as it begins with grace, so it ends with grace, as it begins on the side of God, who binds Himself in the first article to bestow pardon on all who ask it, so it is completed on the side of God, who, by what we shall call our fourth article, binds Himself also to bestow the Holy Spirit on all who ask it. From first to last, it is altogether of grace. From the commencement to the completion of the new man in Christ Jesus grace has to do with it. It is grace which lays the foundation, and it is grace also which raises the superstructure, till, in the language of the prophet, the headstone thereof is brought full with shoutings, and we cry, Grace, grace unto it.

By the third article, which requires our obedience, it may be thought or feared that the covenant had fallen from grace, and so it would, were it not that the fourth article brought it up again. True it is that by the one article man stands engaged to the work of obedience; but it is just as true that by the other article God stands engaged to make us both willing and able for the work. He works in us, and so as to set us working: He both makes us like the work, and makes us strong for the performance of it: He so changes our whole nature—gives so different a taste and such different affections to our inner man, that what was before our dislike and our drudgery becomes our delight; and it is now our meat and our drink, as of our Saviour before us, to do the will of God. He sheds abroad in our hearts the love of Himself by the Holy Ghost; and they who love God love His law. "Oh, how love I Thy law," says the Psalmist, "it is my meditation all the day." It is not the same as before. It is not the same with the new as it was with the old covenant—with the covenant of grace as with the covenant of works. Under the one, the law was given on tables of stone—and the whole bent of our inclinations was against it, so as to make it a hard and a heartless service, under the other, the law is graven upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts, and our affections are enlisted on the side of the new obedience of the gospel. If by the first article God binds Himself by promise to forgive you, by the fourth article He as much binds Himself by promise to sanctify you—to uphold all your goings, and carry you forward from strength to strength in the way of His commandments. It is your part of the covenant that henceforward you shall obey, but it is as much God's part of the covenant that He shall enable you to obey—and one of the most glorious testimonies to this effect in the whole of Scripture, given first in the Old Testament and repeated afterwards by quotation in the New, first by the prophet Jeremiah, and afterwards by the apostle Paul—a most glorious testimony, and delivered, too, in the terms of a covenant, is the following—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant and this shall be the covenant, that I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my people; and I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Be not afraid, then, to engage in the service—He stands engaged to strengthen you for the service. Be not afraid to vow unto the Lord, He will enable you to pay your vows. Is it your heart's wish to be good?—it is as much His wish to make you good. Enter into His covenant; take a fast and firm hold and He will neither be wanting on His part, nor will He leave or let you to fall away from yours, and so you will be washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of your God.

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